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DAILY MEDITATIONS.

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DAILY MEDITATIONS
ON THE
MYSTERIES OF OUR HOLY FAITH

AND ON THE
LIVES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND OF THE SAINTS.

Third Part

CONTAINS

MEDITATIONS FROM EASTER SUNDAY TO THE TENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST.

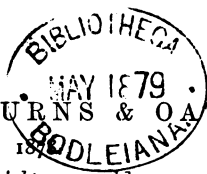
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OF

REV. FATHER ALONSO DE ANDRADE, S.J.

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Card. Archiep. Westmonast.

DAILY MEDITATIONS.

FIRST MEDITATION.

For Easter Sunday.

HOW CHRIST, AFTER DESCENDING INTO LIMBO, AND DELIVERING THE SOULS OF THE HOLY FATHERS, APPEARED TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER.

First Point.—Consider how, when Christ had consummated the work of our redemption, His Body remained on the Cross, whilst His most holy Soul, united with the Divinity, went down into Limbo, a place in the centre of the earth, to fulfil the desires of those souls who had awaited Him so many centuries, and how He illumined those dungeons more effectually than any sun, and made them glorious by His presence. Contemplate the joy of those saints at seeing the fulfilment of their long-delayed hopes; with what delight they would receive Him, in what words they would express their gratitude for so incomparable a benefit, and how well spent they would consider their labours and sorrow at the delay of the promise, now that they saw it so abundantly fulfilled without fear of diminution. Take courage by their example to hope in the Lord, and never to be faint-hearted even if He delay, for His promises are infallible, and His rewards greater than any we could ask for.

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Second Point.—Consider how our Redeemer, having delivered those saints from their captivity, and having communicated to them a share of His glory, returned to the sepulchre where lay His most Holy Body, and in the presence of all that holy company of blessed spirits which He brought with Him, reunited Himself to it, and so glorified it that it became more beautiful than the sun, moon, or stars, or any created thing, and came forth alive and glorious from the tomb, without being hindered, as Lazarus was, by the stone that closed the entrance. Consider the glory of the Lord, what congratulations He received from all those saints, and what grateful thanks they rendered Him for having saved them at so great a cost to Himself, He who could have redeemed them by His only word. Harken to the music of the angels singing victory, and take note of all that must have occurred. See what a reward is prepared for sufferings endured with patience for the love of God, and what a crown awaits the victorious; resolve to fight valiantly the battles of the Lord, enduring patiently, for His love, whatever trials assail thee, in the hope of receiving the reward for them from His divine hand; and leave not His presence without congratulating Him a thousand times for His glory, rejoicing in it much more than if it were thine own.

Third Point.—Consider and weigh all that has been said, and ponder, for the profit of thy soul, how Christ might easily have released and raised the Holy Fathers from the dead by a single word, as He brought to life Lazarus and the son of the widow of Naim; or by the voice of an angel, as He will raise up the whole world at the last day; and how He would not do so otherwise than in Person, first, for the increase of their joy, then, in order to triumph over hell, and lastly, to teach us to visit and console in person the afflicted in prisons, hospitals, or exile, and to comfort them in their griefs, as did the friends of holy Job. Contemplate the four qualities that Christ communicated to His Body, which

were agility, subtilty, light, and impassibility ; and turning thine eyes on thyself, entreat Him to raise thee up from the death of sin to the life of grace, and to communicate these four qualities to thy soul. Agility, that is, fervour and readiness in His service ; subtilty, to overcome all obstacles, not allowing thyself to be deterred by any ; light, to discover thyself to thy spiritual guide and director, hiding nothing that concerns thy conscience ; and impassibility, never to return to sin, but to preserve the life of grace wholly without stain, even as Christ arose to die no more.

Fourth Point.—Consider with St. Bonaventure how the Redeemer of the world went at once without delay to visit and console His most Holy Mother, who, as the same saint remarks, was praying in retirement, and affectionately beseeching the Eternal Father to fulfil His promise, and raise to life her most Blessed Son. Whilst thus in prayer, she saw Him before her, more glorious than can be imagined, accompanied by that army of saints all clothed in robes of glory. Contemplate the sweet conversation of the Son and of the Mother on this occasion, seeing the tempest of His Passion past, and finding themselves in the tranquillity of bliss ; see what congratulations that Holy Mother received from the saints, and what grateful thanks for her share in the work of redemption, and how great was their mutual joy at meeting. Rejoice with them, and learn for thy profit how great is the advantage of those who share in the sufferings of Christ, since He so promptly rewards their merits. Ponder the recompense He granted to His blessed Body and to His most Holy Mother, hastening His hour not to delay their consolation ; and take courage to bear thy cross in His company, that thou mayst merit to be crowned with Him in glory.

SECOND MEDITATION.**For Easter Monday.****HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD
TO EMMAUS—(LUKE XXIV.)**

First Point.—See with the eyes of thy soul the two disciples on their road to Emmaus, sad on account of the death of the Lord, disconsolate because unconscious of His Resurrection, and conversing by the way on His life and Passion. And behold Christ Himself, in the dress of a pilgrim, who follows and joins them, seeking, like the Good Shepherd, the sheep that had strayed from the fold. Ponder how often, without thy knowledge, God goes after thee, seeks thee, assists thee, converses with thee, consoles thee, and counts thy steps to give thee for them a very great reward. Learn of Him to show mercy to thy brethren, consoling them in their sorrows and afflictions; study His vigilance to exercise it towards those committed to thy care, sparing neither labour nor watchfulness in what concerns their welfare. Rejoice to have so good and loving a Lord, who on the day of His great triumph forgot not His own, but took a new disguise to console and gladden them, and give them the news of His resurrection; and beg of Him not to leave thee alone and disconsolate, although thy lukewarmness deserve it, but to give thee some share of the joy He dispenses to all.

Second Point.—Consider the reasons, on the part of these two disciples, why Christ came and visited them, announcing to them His Resurrection. First, was the sorrow they felt for the Passion and death of the Saviour, for whosoever compassionates Him deserves to be consoled, and to have a share in the glory of His Resurrection. Secondly, they were conversing on the life and Passion, miracles, and preaching of Christ; and holy conversation on the life and Passion of our Lord is an

allurement that draws Him into our company. Learn from the one and the other for thy profit to meditate continually on the life and Passion of the Saviour, and to eliminate from thy discourse all worldly matters, treating of spiritual and holy things, that thou mayst deserve His visit and consolation.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, although aware of what the disciples were saying, yet asks to be told, discovering their wounds like a skilful surgeon, in order to cure them. Oh, how often dost thou remain sick for want of showing thy wounds to thy confessor, who holds the place of God! Hear how Christ reprehends His disciples, calling them ignorant and of little faith, since they were so ready to doubt His Resurrection; and placing thy hand on thy heart, own how much more thou dost merit the reproach than they; observe next the humility with which they listen to Him, without knowing Him, or recognising who He was, and learn to bear silently and humbly the correction of thy superiors and spiritual Fathers. Hear also the disciples say that their hearts burnt within them at His words. Oh, that God would speak to thy heart and inflame it with His love! Speak to God if thou wouldst have God speak to thee and inflame thee with His ardent charity.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate what took place when they drew near to the town; how our Lord made as though He would leave them, whilst in reality He was yearning to remain. Oh, how much does this Lord love us! Whenever He seems to hide or withdraw Himself from us, it is but a feint or a threat. Oh, depart not from God, and God will not leave thee. He made as though He would pass on, to try the affection of His well-beloved disciples, that they might pray and detain Him; thus does He hide Himself, and feign to go away and leave thee, that thou mayst pray and entreat Him not to depart. Call Him, seek Him, cry out to Him, tell Him to remain, and not to abandon thee; for He is more anxious to assist thee than thou canst be to retain Him with

thee: He seeks but to try thy love. Lastly, be present at table with the disciples; see how Christ gives way at the first word, sits down with them, takes bread in His hands, and having done this, divides and distributes it as He had done at the Last Supper, by this action discovering Himself to them; they recognise and adore Him, and He disappears from their presence, leaving them bathed in an ocean of delight. O Lord, that Thou wouldst deign to visit us! Oh, that Thou wouldst come and seek this lost sheep, and feed it with a few of the crumbs that fall from Thy table. Regard not my unworthiness but Thine infinite goodness; grant me to believe in Thee, to love Thee, and ever to preach Thee; grant me a most firm confidence in Thy promises, and one ray of Thy light that I may know Thee and seek Thee, despising all that the world adores for Thy love.

THIRD MEDITATION.

For Tuesday in Easter Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE ASSEMBLED APOSTLES
(LUKE XXIV.)

First Point.—Consider how all the apostles and disciples of Christ, being gathered together on the day of His Resurrection, Christ glorified appeared to them, and consoled them with those sweet words, “Peace be to you; it is I, fear not:” for where God is there is always peace, and peace engenders security and casts out fear. Ponder the care of Christ to collect His sheep, to visit and console them; beg of Him not to forget thee, but to visit and assist thee, and to give thee peace, rest, and tranquillity of heart, casting out all anxiety and fear; for if thou hast God with thee there is no cause for fear, even though the whole world arm itself against thee.

Second Point.—Consider how the disciples, being unable, for the greatness of their joy, to convince themselves that it was the Lord, He showed them His wounds, saying, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.” Ponder how on that very day He had not allowed Himself to be touched by St. Mary Magdalen, and now He commands His apostles to handle Him; because St. Mary Magdalen did not need that proof for her faith, for she believed most firmly that He was risen: the disciples did need it, and so He gave Himself to be handled. Whence thou wilt perceive that oftentimes weak women exceed in faith and devotion learned men. Observe also the benignity of the Saviour, who with so great humility gave Himself to be touched and handled, that He might dissipate their incredulity. See with what devotion all that holy company would approach to touch the wounds of Christ, and what joy must have been in their hearts. Approach thou also with greatest reverence to adore and venerate them as the instruments of thy redemption and the secure port of thy salvation.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, yet further to confirm their faith, asked them to give Him something to eat, and they offered him a piece of fish and some honey, which He eat before them, to convince them that He was not a spirit, as they imagined, but a real man. Oh, great love and delicate tenderness of the Saviour, who being glorified, and thus in a state foreign to eating and drinking, went out of His way, and humbled Himself by performing these actions common to the wayfarer, and suitable to so inferior a state, in order to win the souls of men, to save them from infidelity, and establish them in the belief of His Resurrection. Give Him many thanks for all this, and see what thou shouldst do for the good of thy soul and of those under thy charge, and when it is advisable, hesitate not to humble thyself to the performance of lowly acts, abating something of thy dignity in imitation of Christ our Lord. See how He eats

of what His disciples give Him, and how He gives thee to eat of His own Flesh at the table of the altar. Consider what thanks thou owest Him, and with what devotion thou shouldst serve Him in return for so singular a mercy.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which He terminated His visit, telling them that so it behoved that Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead, to enter into His glory ; and commanding them to preach to the whole world penance and the remission of sins. Ponder for thy profit that if Christ had to enter into His glory by the way of the Cross and of an infamous death, how much more fitting is it for thee thus to enter the glory which is not thine. Note also that He commands the preaching of penance and of the remission of sins, because they depend on each other, and the one is not found without the other. If thou wouldst obtain pardon of thy sins, it is necessary to do penance for them ; resolve so to do, and beg of God His grace for the fulfilment of thy purpose.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday in Easter Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES WHILST FISHING
IN THE SEA OF TIBERIAS—(JOHN XXI.)

First Point.—Consider how, as the Holy Evangelist St. John tells us, St. Peter invited the other disciples to go fishing, and not having caught anything all night, Christ appeared on the shore and ordered them to cast the net on the right hand, and they then took a great draught. Wherein ponder how it becomes the disciples of Christ to solicit others to the performance of good works in His service after the example of St. Peter, and learn hence always to draw thy neighbour to works of piety and

devotion, and to persuade him to the performance of them. Consider next the mercy of the Saviour, and how great was that He manifested towards His disciples, appearing to them during their labour, and when discouraged at having caught nothing, and draw thence great confidence in God, that He will be favourable to thee and visit thee in thy labours, and in the works that thou undertakest for His holy service. Beg of Him not to forget thee, but to visit and strengthen thee as He visited and strengthened His disciples.

Second Point.—Consider the reasons why the disciples caught nothing until Christ our Redeemer came to them. First, because they cast their net at night, which signifies sin; and those that work whilst in a state of sin, however hard they labour, gain nothing for eternal life. Secondly, because at first they fished of their own will, and afterwards in obedience to Christ's command, which assures success to those who are governed and guided by it. Thirdly, because they cast the net on the left hand, which signifies the temporal goods of this world; and Christ our Lord commanded them to cast it on the right, which symbolises eternal treasures. From which thou hast to learn to labour always in the light of grace, and not in the darkness of sin, to be guided by the will of God, seeking always His honour, glory, and service, in whatever works thou dost perform, and always to cast thy net to the right, seeking heavenly things if thou wouldst obtain great profit. Grieve for all the labour thou hast spent in the course of thy life in laying up perishable riches, and in seeking the dignities and vain honours of this world, all of which are empty nothingness; and taking the advice of Christ, cast thy net to the right for time and heavenly riches, and thy labour will be as completely successful as was that of the disciples.

Third Point.—Consider how the Holy Evangelist says, that whilst the disciples were fishing at His command, Christ was on the shore, in their sight, without their knowing Him, preparing food for them when they

should come. For He is ever in sight of those who labour for His service, without their seeing or knowing Him, and He prepares their food, providing for their needs. Draw from this great courage to employ thyself in His service, with steadfast confidence in the care His providence ever has of His servants and of thee, supplying thy wants. Cast all thy care with the utmost confidence into His hands, and be assured that He sees and assists thee in thy works and labours, as He did the disciples, though thou seest Him not with thy bodily eyes.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as soon as the disciples had taken so great a draught of fishes, they recognised that it was by the virtue of Christ; and learn to acknowledge that the success of thy labours is the work of His hands, and to give Him thanks for it, attributing the glory of them to Him from whose hand thou receivest it. See how the disciples then came to shore, with what joy Christ would receive them, and theirs at beholding Him risen; the benignity with which He would sit down with them, divide the bread and fish that He had prepared on the hot coals, and give it to them to eat. O sweet Jesus! blessed be Thou a thousand times for dealing thus with Thy servants! Who would not serve Thee always, Who art so tender and loving? Approach the Lord, my soul, with the disciples, leave the restless sea of this world in which thou art engulfed, abandon the nets which hold thee prisoner, and casting aside all worldly occupations, entreat Him to permit thee to draw near to His table, beg of Him to give thee a few of the crumbs that fall from it, and take thy place amongst His people, to remain for ever in His service.

*FIFTH MEDITATION.**For Thursday in Easter Week.*HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO ST. MARY MAGDALEN
(JOHN XX.)

First Point.—Consider how St. Peter, St. John, and St. Mary Magdalen came to the sepulchre to seek Christ, and how the disciples went away because they found not the body of the Lord ; but St. Mary Magdalen remained at the door weeping His absence, and merited to see, alive and glorious, Him whom she sought as dead. Learn hence that it is not sufficient to seek Christ in order to find Him, unless, like St. Mary Magdalen, we seek with perseverance, and that those deserve to enjoy the glory of His resurrection who, with lively faith and devotion, seek, follow, and contemplate His Passion and death, like this holy penitent seated by the tomb.

Second Point.—Consider the intense love of this holy penitent, the tears that she shed because she found not, alive or dead, the Beloved of her soul ; and how, beholding the angels clothed in white, neither the sight of them nor their words sufficed to calm her grief, though both were so consoling ; for to them that truly love naught can give comfort but the finding of God. Enter into account with thyself, and see how great a distance there is between thee and this holy woman in the love of the Lord, and how little thou dost love Him since thou seekest Him so tepidly, findest consolation in earthly goods, and art content without thy God. Weep and bewail, with this holy penitent, the absence of thy sweet Spouse, and know neither joy nor rest until, like her, thou find Him to rejoice with Him.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, attracted by the allurements of her sighs and fervent tears, appeared to her in the dress and appearance of a gardener, and spoke to

her words of consolation, saying, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Well did the Lord know for whom she wept, and whom she sought, but He asks her to hear it from her own mouth, and to purify her love yet further. Oh, how often does Christ conceal Himself, and does not at once make Himself known, although He is with us, in order to try our love, and to make us burn with it the more, that we may multiply our prayers, our sighs, and petitions, and that we may seek Him with greater fervour! Learn hence what love thou shouldst manifest in seeking and serving Him, what perseverance in that service, and what lively faith in His presence with thee, even though, like Mary, thou fail to recognise Him.

Fourth Point. — Consider how St. Mary Magdalen answered that she sought the dead Christ, and forthwith she found Him alive, and Christ risen and glorious discovered Himself to her by one only word that He spoke: "Mary." Oh, how easy is it for God in one instant to console the poor, and to change wailing into mirth and sorrow into joy. Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. Contemplate the delight of this saint at seeing the Beloved of her soul, whom she was weeping as dead, more glorious and more resplendent than the sun; with what ardour she cast herself at His Feet, where she had found the remedy of her sins, and how Christ restrained her from touching Him, because, as we said before, her faith did not, as that of others, need such confirmation in order to believe that He had risen. Draw from all this great profit for thy soul, confiding in the Lord that He will comfort thee in thy distress, and that, as with St. Mary Magdalen, so will He double thy joy, fulfilling thy desires more perfectly than thou canst conceive.

SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Friday in Easter Week.****HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES IN GALILEE
(MATT. XXVIII.)**

First Point.—Consider how Christ commanded His disciples to go to a mountain of Galilee, that He might there manifest Himself glorified, and give them the last directions and teachings of His Gospel; and they being there assembled, He fulfilled His promise, showing Himself to all in His risen state. Contemplate the very great joy the disciples must have felt at beholding their Holy Master so glorious, and with what delight they would participate in His blessedness. Learn hence for thy advancement, first, to rejoice with the apostles in the glory of our Redeemer, and next, to withdraw thyself into a solitude and ascend the mountain of perfection, in order to merit to enjoy the glory of the resurrection of the Lord. For although He might have granted them this favour in the city, Christ led His disciples into solitude and to the mountain height, to teach them to leave the commerce of towns, and to retire to solitude, in order to enjoy the mysterious secrets of the Lord.

Second Point.—Listen to and meditate the words that the Saviour said to them: "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them," &c. Consider that as Christ humbled Himself more than any other person in heaven or on earth, so was He exalted above all, and to Him was given universal power over all, that thou mayst learn to humble thyself, and to perceive that the more thou abasest thyself, the greater honour thou wilt receive from God. Notice also in what Christ employs His power, not in exalting Himself nor in humbling others, but in honouring and exalting all, communicating His

power to His disciples that they may forgive the sins of men, and may baptize them, and teach and direct them in the way to heaven. Draw from this great desire to employ the power and authority that God may give thee in doing good to thy neighbour, and in honouring and assisting him, as Christ employed His in the service of His brethren.

Third Point.—Consider how He commanded them not only to baptize, but also to teach and exhort all to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded; because faith alone suffices not, but it must be accompanied by good works. Take account of thy actions, and see how thou fulfillest this precept; see whether thou dost observe and accomplish all that Christ has commanded thee; weep over the faults thou hast committed against His commandments, and beg of the Lord grace to keep them with entire fidelity.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which the Redeemer winds up His exhortation, saying, “And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” Oh, most consoling words! Consider of what great comfort this promise must have been to the hearts of the disciples, hearing that their Master would remain with them, and never for a single day cease to assist them with His grace, His power, and His aid, counselling, fortifying, and defending them. To thee also does He speak in these words; observe then that He assists thee, and is ever with thee in all thy actions; perform them, therefore, as though He were visibly present, and take courage in thy tribulations, since thou hast by thy side so tender and so omnipotent a Lord. Learn to place great trust in His power, and to strive manfully, confiding in His assistance, and beg help from Him not to faint in any contradiction or temptation that may assail thee.

*SEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday in Easter Week.*

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO ST. PETER—(JOHN XX. ;
MATT. XVI. ; LUKE XXIV.)

First Point.—Consider how St. Mary Magdalen and the other holy women, returning from the sepulchre, gave account to the apostles of what they had seen, and that Christ was risen ; and how they were not believed, and the vision of the angels and the other signs they mentioned were treated as delusions ; and how they suffered this discredit for bearing testimony to the truth of the mysteries of Christ. From this thou shouldst learn, first, to imitate the fervour and charity of these holy women in sharing with thy neighbour whatever knowledge thou mayst possess of the divine mysteries, and of spiritual things whenever it may tend to the service of God, as they gave the apostles the news of the Resurrection of Christ, even though in consequence thou hast to suffer in the beginning some discredit, trusting that God will defend thy cause. Secondly, not to treat spiritual persons with incredulity, as did the apostles ; for God oftentimes chooses weak instruments for great things, thus to show forth His power ; and He prefers those of higher virtue, even when less gifted, to those of greater parts, in order to humble the latter and exalt the former. Humble thyself before God, and submit to His judgment, acknowledging thyself to be the least of all, and the most unworthy of His favours.

Second Point.—Consider how, on hearing the news of the Resurrection, St. Peter and St. John, as the most fervent in the love of Christ and the least incredulous of His mysteries, ran to the sepulchre to assure themselves of the fact, the others remaining shut up in the Cenacle for fear of the Jews. Oh, had we but a spark

of tender love for Christ, how many obstacles should we overcome, how we should despise the fears that make us cowards in His service, and how we should run with fervent eagerness in the company of these apostles to serve, acknowledge, and bless Him. Take courage from their example, and beg of the Lord to give thee a spark of this holy fire, that thou mayst despise all human fears, and run with fervour in the path of virtue, seeking His honour and glory, and better service.

Third Point.—Consider how the two arrived at the sepulchre, and how St. John waited to allow St. Peter to enter, giving him the first place as to his superior, and entered following him ; and they found not the Body of the Saviour, but only the winding-sheet and the linen in which Christ had been wrapt ; and the angels appeared not to them as to the women, nor did they receive at that time any further proof of the Resurrection, the Lord relying on their greater virtue and constancy to cause them to believe what had been more clearly demonstrated to the women. From which thou shouldst learn, first, the respect and courtesy that thou shouldst always show towards thy superiors and prelates, giving them the first place, as St. John did to St. Peter ; and secondly, not to expect revelations or miracles in the service of God, and in confirmation of His holy mysteries, but to believe them through the means that He has provided in His Church, for then will thy faith be the firmer and more meritorious when the proofs are fewer and the evidence less.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as St. Luke says, St. Peter withdrew in admiration to think over what he had seen, and how being thus in meditation, praising God, rejoicing at the glory of His Master, and renewing, as it is piously believed, his grief and tears at having denied Him, the risen Lord appeared to him, consoled him, strengthened him in his holy faith, that he might confirm his brethren, and bathing his spirit in ineffable delight, granted him pardon of his sins, and left him

infinitely consoled. In which thou shouldst ponder how Christ appeared in the first place (after His Holy Mother) to St. Mary Magdalen, and to St. Peter, when meditating on His mysteries and weeping for His absence, both having sinned and done bitter penance for their faults. From which thou shouldst learn to meditate slowly and attentively the mysteries of Christ, and also to have great confidence that thou wilt obtain from the Divine Mercy pardon of thy sins if thou dost condign penance for them, and with that pardon many graces and favours, from the hand of God.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For Low Sunday.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO HIS DISCIPLES IN THE CENACLE. (JOHN XX.)

First Point.—Consider how to Christ no door is shut, and how where evil could not find admittance good entered. For the disciples being assembled in the Cenacle, the doors well closed for fear of the Jews, Christ arisen and glorious entered, and placed Himself in their midst, like the sun in the centre of the heavens, illuminating and gladdening their hearts with the light of His Resurrection and the sweetness of His words. Consider the benignity of the Saviour, the love He bears His chosen ones, the care He takes to console them in their sorrows, and how for this purpose He multiplies miracles, making use of the subtilty that He enjoyed in His glorious Body to enter through closed doors. Rejoice to have such a Lord and Master, and place great confidence in His love and providence ; beg of Him to visit thee in thine afflictions and troubles, and to console and strengthen thee as He did His apostles and disciples.

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Second Point.—Ponder how in this visit Christ placed Himself in the centre of that congregation ; for He desires to be in the midst of His chosen ones, and in the centre of thy heart, making it His abode and resting-place. Empty it then of all earthly things, and offer it entirely to Him, that He may come unto thee, visit thee, console thee, and abide with thee. Ponder the extreme delight of all that holy company at beholding the glory of their Master and Redeemer ; how all would approach to adore, reverence, and serve Him ; with what love and caresses He would receive them, and reassure them against the fear they were in of the Jews who persecuted them. Approach thou also, adore and reverence thy Lord ; beg of Him to bless thee, to give thee a share in the joy of His Resurrection, and to strengthen and encourage thee in His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider how He showed them the sacred wounds of His Hands, Feet, and Side, which in His glorified Body must have shone more brightly than the stars of heaven, thus increasing His beauty. See how He prides Himself on having suffered for thee, that thou mayst place thy pride in suffering for Him ; and behold how the affronts and wounds suffered in this world for the glory of God and the good of souls are in the next turned into diamonds and precious stones of glory, honour, and beauty. O Lord ! would that I might suffer affronts, stripes, wounds, insults, and death for Thee as Thou didst endure them for me ! Beg of the Lord this favour, and encourage thyself by His example to suffer with joy for His love whatever may befall thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Evangelist St. John says that He then breathed on them, and gave them the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins, not contenting Himself with the great happiness He gave them in making them participators of the glory of His Resurrection, but giving them at the same time the fulness of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. Especially

for this did Christ come into the world, for this He sent His disciples, not to punish but to forgive sins, and for this did He communicate to them the Holy Ghost. Oh, that He would come into our souls, and give us this gift of gifts of His Holy Spirit! Beg of Him to come into thine, and to do thee this favour, pardoning thee thy sins with the liberality with which He pardoned the apostles, giving them the very breath of His mouth. O Lord, that Thou wouldst give me strength with Thy breath, the pardon of my sins, and grace to abide in Thy favour; this I beg, this I entreat; hold me in Thy hand that I may never offend Thee more.

NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday in Low Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES WITH
ST. THOMAS. (JOHN XX.)

First Point.—Consider how, as the Evangelist St. John says, when Christ visited His apostles in the Cenacle, St. Thomas was not with them, and for that reason did not enjoy the glory of His Resurrection, and how Christ, although He might have appeared to him separately, would not do so, thus showing us how we often fail to participate in His consolations and mercies because we frequent not the society of those to whom He communicates them. From which thou shouldst draw a disposition and firm resolution to avoid as much as thou canst all singularity, and to follow the ordinary way with others in exercises of religion, and in those things belonging to the service of God, that He may not deprive thee of the graces that He communicates to others.

Second Point.—Consider the incredulity that came over the soul of St. Thomas, which could not be over-

come by the most Holy Virgin, nor by the apostles, nor by all the disciples, who, as eye-witnesses, testified that they had seen Christ risen and glorious; God so permitting it for the greater certainty of our faith in His Resurrection, and for the good of our souls. From which thou shouldst derive, on the one hand, great fear, caused by the knowledge of thy weakness, of falling into a like sin; for if so holy an apostle fell, how much more easily mightst thou fall into greater sins; and, on the other hand, submission of thy judgment to that of God, who permits such falls to prevent greater evils, and to draw from them great good, as happened with St. Thomas.

Third Point.—Consider how that holy congregation, afflicted by the incredulity of St. Thomas, would have recourse to prayer, and would supplicate the Lord most tenderly in his behalf, and at their prayer Christ came and placed Himself in their midst, and spoke to St. Thomas, calling him and showing him His wounds, that he might see and touch them, and by that experience be undeceived and drawn out of his ignorance and error. O most benign Jesus! O careful Shepherd! how evident is the love Thou bearest us, since for one single sheep Thou dost reopen Thy wounds, therein to shelter it and to heal it with the myrrh and sweetest balsam of Thy most precious Blood! Pause awhile on this thought, and ponder for the profit of thy soul how important it is to associate with the good, and of what value are their prayers, since those of the apostles of the Lord were of such service to St. Thomas, and how God repaid them for their charity towards him by revisiting them and sharing with them His glory; for although He might have appeared to St. Thomas alone, as He did to St. Peter and to Magdalen, He would not do so save in the company of all, to give them a second time participation in the glory of His Resurrection. Derive hence a lively desire to care for thy flock, who are those committed to thee by God, labouring for each one with the same

earnestness as for all, according to the example of Christ, and a firm confidence in His pity, seeing how great was that He exhibited towards St. Thomas. Beg of Him to seek thee and to place thee within His wounds, where thou wilt be safe and sheltered from all thine enemies.

Fourth Point.—Consider attentively what further befell St. Thomas; see with what confusion he must have stood before all the apostles in the presence of the Redeemer; how he must have cast himself with shame at His feet, weeping for his incredulity, and entreating forgiveness. Ponder how the Blessed Virgin and all that holy company must have prayed for him, with what benignity and love the Saviour would then raise him up, telling him to put his finger into the wounds of His Hands, Feet, and Side, for that He was willing to die again for his sake alone. Hear how St. Thomas confesses Him for his Lord and his God; and ruminate that sentence with which Christ wound up this visit and took His leave, saying, “Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed;” whence thou shouldst learn the merit of faith, not only in the Resurrection, but in all the mysteries of the life and death of the Redeemer. Give Him thanks for having given thee light to know and to confess Him, and beg His grace to persevere in His faith, and to draw all to His knowledge and service, longing that all who are or ever shall be born into the world may know, praise, confess, and believe in Him.

TENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday in Low Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE HOLY WOMEN RETURNING FROM THE SEPULCHRE—(MARK XVI.)

First Point.—Consider how fervent was the prayer of the holy women who accompanied Christ and served Him

during the whole of His public life ; and at the time of His Passion followed Him to Calvary, when, with the exception of St. John, who stood at the foot of the Cross, all His disciples abandoned Him. Consider how they bore the Blessed Virgin company in her solitude the whole of that Sabbath, and on the following day employed their small means in the purchase of precious ointments wherewith to anoint the Body of the Saviour ; and notwithstanding the fear they might have of the guards who kept the sepulchre, they set out very early in the morning, with courage and confidence, to anoint the Body of their Lord. Contemplate the constancy of these holy women, and what high virtues they exhibited in all these actions, what faith and confidence, what tender love and charity towards God, what fortitude and perseverance, serving Him in life and in death ; what fervour and diligence in seeking Him, and what generosity in the employment of their own property to minister to His wants. Learn from the great lesson they teach how to serve thy Redeemer, and beg of Him grace to imitate them in all things.

Second Point.—Consider how they came to the sepulchre, and how God removed all the obstacles that lay in their path ; for He opened the door by the ministry of angels, and terrified the guards so that they found them as dead, and in their place angels who received them with joy, and consoled them with the glad tidings of the Resurrection of the Lord. Draw from all this a feeling of great confidence in the providence of God, that He will remove for thee all the difficulties that may arise in His service, and take courage even though thou be weaker than these women, for thou wilt find the Lord favourable to thee, and His angels will console thee as they did them.

Third Point.—Consider how the Evangelist says that angels, dressed in white robes and seated on the stone of the sepulchre, told the holy women to enter and see the place where the Lord had been laid, and that they did enter and see, assuring themselves thus of His Resurrec-

tion. The sepulchre, as St. Austin says, was a type of Paradise, before the coming of Christ shut and guarded by angels with fire and sword. Ponder how, by the virtue of Christ crucified, that closed door was unlocked, the Paradise of bliss was thrown open to men, and the angels who impeded their entrance now invite and lead them in, and communicate to them its glory as they did to these holy women. Take courage by this example; be ashamed that weak women should have the advantage of thee in the service of the Lord, and resolve seriously to seek Him with diligence if thou wouldst merit the glory of the Resurrection.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as these holy women were returning to the Cenacle, to give account to the apostles of what they had seen, Christ appeared to them on the road and consoled them, communicating to them the glory of His Resurrection, repaying thus their fervour and diligence and the love they bore Him. Contemplate the joy of their souls at seeing alive and glorious Him Whom they had sought as dead, and draw thence great desire to serve such a Lord, who thus rewards with superabundant favours the services rendered Him. Give Him thanks for all, and beg His assistance to love and serve Him, like these holy women, with all the strength of thy soul.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday in Low Week.

ON OTHER APPARITIONS OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES.

First Point.—Consider what St. Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles, that Christ having suffered, appeared to His apostles during the space of forty days, by which is meant that He did not appear to them once

and again, but many times, consoling, encouraging, and confirming them in the faith of His Resurrection, as a good and solicitous Shepherd, caring for His sheep with the same vigilance after as before His death. Contemplate the love that Christ bears His chosen ones, and the solicitude with which He seeks their good, and the increase of His fold, and that He does the same now from heaven as He did when on earth, seeking the advancement of all, and thine in particular. Give Him thanks for all this, and learn from thy Saviour's example to be solicitous for thy neighbour's welfare, and especially for the good of those whom God has committed to thy care.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that during all these forty days that He spent on earth, seeking the increase of His Church, and appearing many times to the disciples, Christ ceased not to prove to them by many arguments the glory of His Resurrection, and how it behoved that He should suffer and die, and afterwards rise again to enter into His glory. He thus gave reason and foundation to our hope in the general resurrection; for, as St. Paul says, if Christ rose not from the dead, vain is our hope of rising again with Him, but if He rose again, as He certainly did, then is our confidence to rise again with Him well founded. Contemplate the glory with which Christ arose to die no more, and meditate that which awaits thee if thou lead a holy life, when thou shalt also arise gloriously to an immortal and eternal life. Strengthen thyself with this hope to follow the footsteps of Christ in this world, in order to obtain the glory of His Resurrection in the next.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Luke adds, that whenever He appeared to His disciples, Christ always spoke to them of the kingdom of God, not of secular and earthly things, but of celestial and divine ones, and especially of the riches and delights of the kingdom of God, encouraging them with this hope for the strife that

awaited them in the propagation of the Gospel, and to endure the labours, persecutions, and martyrdoms that they would have to suffer in order to obtain the crown of so magnificent and glorious a kingdom, and to attain that exceeding greatness which no tongue can adequately describe. Oh, that thou wouldst listen to and meditate on the words that Christ spoke to His beloved disciples concerning the kingdom of God ; how thou wouldst covet its possession, and with what eagerness thou wouldst suffer any tribulation to obtain it ! Contemplate in detail the grandeur, beauty, riches, and delights of the kingdom of the Lord, the peace and security, the glory and tranquillity enjoyed by its inhabitants, and the eternity of its duration in the sight and presence of God, seeing Him face to face as He is in Himself. Lift thy desires from this vile earth to that celestial kingdom, endeavouring to merit and obtain it at the cost of any labour soever, and being persuaded that whatever price thou payest it is still purchased for nothing.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, during this period of forty days, Christ appeared to His disciples in various ways and places, on some occasions manifestly, on others in such manner that they knew Him not, although He conversed with them ; yet they always felt the effect of His words in their hearts. From which thou shouldst learn how He now oftentimes visits and speaks to His chosen ones in various places, without limiting Himself to this one or to that, and without making Himself clearly known, because so it becomes His government and our good. Take account of thyself, and consider how many times the Lord visits thee in this manner, and speaks to thy heart, and how important it is to thee to hearken to His words, and esteem them, and put them in practice. Beg of Him not to forget thee, to give thee His grace to hear and obey Him, and to inflame thy heart with the fire of His charity, as He did the hearts of His disciples to love and serve Him eternally.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday in Lent Week.

HOW CHRIST GAVE TO ST. PETER THE KEYS OF HIS CHURCH
BEFORE ASCENDING TO HEAVEN—(JOHN XXI.)

First Point.—Consider how St. John narrates, that whilst the disciples were at sea fishing with great labour, Christ appeared to them on the shore, spoke and called to them, gave them a great draught of fishes, and seated Himself with great affability in their midst, giving them to eat, and dividing amongst them the bread and fish with tokens of great love. Contemplate the benignity of the Lord on this occasion, and the caresses which He bestows on His chosen ones even after His Resurrection, and rejoice to have so loving and benign a Father and Lord. What endearments He bestows on thee each day at the table of His altar, giving thee His own Body and Blood as food, with infinite love and desire for thy good. Give Him thanks for this, and implore assistance to imitate Him in thy conduct towards thy neighbours, treating them with kindness and humility.

Second Point.—Consider how, the meal being ended, Christ asked St. Peter three times whether he loved Him, and that not in an ordinary degree, but more than the rest, and St. Peter answered that Christ knew that he loved Him, and that he relied on that knowledge. The Saviour then recommended to him His flock, saying, "Feed My sheep, feed My lambs." From which thou shouldst learn what love he should bear towards God who is to feed His flock, that he may seek its increase, and not his own advantage, for this were to love himself and not Christ, for Whose sake he should feed the sheep, without having any other end or interest than His service. Imagine to thyself Christ asking thee, as He did St. Peter, whether thou lovest Him, and see what thou

shouldst answer the Lord, Who knows and penetrates the secrets of thy heart ; see whether thou love thyself, seeking only thine own interest ; how then can the Lord trust His flock to thee, who, instead of a pastor, art a wolf to devour it ? Bewail thy coldness, and the little love thou hast for God, and entreat Him to give thee some particle of the burning love He gave St. Peter, that thou mayst employ thyself in His service, and in doing good to thy neighbour.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ asked St. Peter three times whether he loved Him, in satisfaction for the three denials he made on the night of the Passion. From which thou shouldst draw that the satisfaction must be proportionate to the offence, and that where the sins are numerous the satisfaction must also be great. Place thy hand on thy heart and consider the offences thou hast committed in the course of thy life, and how little satisfaction thou hast made for them ; for this reason God grants not to thee the favours He bestowed on St. Peter when he made satisfaction for his sins. Resolve, in His presence, to perform due penance for thy sins, and beg His grace to satisfy for them as thou shouldst.

Fourth Point.—Consider how on St. Peter's saying that he loved Him, Christ committed to him the charge of His Church, making him supreme shepherd of His flock. Well did the Lord know whether St. Peter loved Him or not ; but He chose to question him, that he might confess it with his own mouth, and to give him to understand that he was to show the love he bore Him by feeding His sheep, and by looking after and seeking the good of His brethren, whom He calls His sheep, on account of the love He bears them all. Whence thou canst learn the love that superiors should have for their subordinates, considering them as a flock beloved of God, to Whom they must testify their love by the care they take in feeding His sheep. Consider how God is on the watch to see what love thou hast for Him, by

that which thou dost exhibit towards thy neighbours, and that He commends them to thee, that thou mayst cherish them, especially those who are poor and lowly, for these, as more necessitous, are His lambs.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday in Low Week.

HOW CHRIST BORE HIS WOUNDS ON HIS RISEN BODY.

First Point.—To-day being Friday, contemplate the marks of the Passion on the risen Body of Christ our Lord, each one more resplendent than the sun; see what glory the Eternal Father has bestowed on Him because of all He suffered for men. Consider that whereas He might have risen without those marks, as He did without those of the stripes and of the thorns, and those made on His Divine Face by the buffets He received, He willed that the wounds made by the nails and the spear should remain, because they were the marks of His Cross by which He consummated our redemption. Whence thou shouldst derive great courage and consolation in thy troubles and labours, remembering that they are tokens of glory and means to attain it, and that in a few days they will be changed into the eternal repose that thou wilt enjoy in bliss.

Second Point.—Consider the reasons why Christ preserved the wounds of His Passion on His sacred Body after the Resurrection, of which one was to keep alive and fresh in us the memory of His Passion, and to give us to understand that, as the Apostle St. John tells us in the Apocalypse, that in heaven the angels and blessed sing canticles of the Passion, so here on earth His chosen ones should also sing them, bearing it ever in mind,

meditating it, contemplating it, and conversing thereon ; for there is nothing more agreeable to the Lord. Beg of God His grace to meditate His Passion as thou shouldst, and with all the tenderness and gratitude to which so great a mercy obliges thee.

Third Point.—Consider another reason given by St. Bernard, which is that He might intercede for men before the Eternal Father, showing His open wounds, and begging, through them, pardon for sin and fresh graces and mercies. O Lord, what thanks can I render Thee for the love Thou bearest me, since not once, but many times, Thou hast opened for me the wounds of Thy sacred Body ! O my soul ! see what an Advocate thou hast in the presence of God, and what a plea, signed with His Blood, He presents at His tribunal for thee ! Pray with Him ; offer those most precious wounds in satisfaction for thy sins, and beg of the Eternal Father through them to grant thee fresh favours ; for their value is infinite, and therefore greater than anything thou canst ask for or obtain. Beg for thyself and for the whole Church abundance of celestial goods ; let the wounds of Christ supply with their value what is wanting to thy works.

Fourth Point.—Consider how St. Paul says that he bore stamped on his body the wounds of Christ, because by mortification and penance he made himself His image, also because he glorified in them rejoicing more in ignominies for Christ's sake than in the honours of the world, and also because of the grateful memory he always carried with him of so signal a benefit. Whence let us draw so to study the image of our Redeemer as to transform our bodies into living images of Him by mortification and penance, to glory in His ignominies, as He gloried in suffering them for us, and to take courage to suffer crucifixion and death, if need be, for His service.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday in Low Week.

ON THE ANTIPHON SUNG BY THE CHURCH AT THIS SEASON.

“Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven ! Alleluia !
He whom thou wast meet to bear, Alleluia !
As He promised, hath arisen ; Alleluia !
Pour for us to Him thy prayer. Alleluia !”

First Point.—Consider how the Church at this season of the Resurrection of Christ calls the Blessed Virgin Queen of Heaven ; for although this title always belongs to her, yet at this season did she both exhibit and experience more particularly its appositeness, her soul being transformed into a paradise of glory and bliss with the joy of the Resurrection of her most Holy Son. Contemplate the delight she experienced, which was greater than that enjoyed by any creature ; for as she had suffered more than any one at the time of the Passion, so was her joy the greater at the time of the Resurrection. See how all the angels would approach with great jubilee to congratulate her, as would also St. Mary Magdalen and the holy women who went to the sepulchre, and all the saints who arose with Christ, and amongst them the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, her most worthy spouse, with whom she would hold most sweet converse. Rejoice at her glory, and congratulate her on it.

Second Point.—Consider the second reason for joy that our Mother the Church gives, which is also another title of our Blessed Lady, namely, that Christ is her Son ; for to no one does this glory belong in the manner it does to the Blessed Virgin ; and as her suffering was so much the greater because it was her Son who died on the Cross, so was her glory the greater because it was her Son who rose again. And if Jacob came as it were from death to life when he heard that his son Joseph,

whom he had wept as dead, was the governor of Egypt, and his spirit was bathed in an ocean of joy, how much greater beyond comparison may we not infer was the delight of the Blessed Virgin when she not only heard but saw and enjoyed her Son alive and glorious, Whom she had seen die on the Cross. This delight was intensified on the one hand by the great love she bore Him, and on the other by the height of glory and blessedness to which she saw Him raised above all creatures. And thou, O my soul! if thou lovest thy sweet Spouse, thou shouldst for all these reasons rejoice more and more in His glorious Resurrection, in company with His most Holy Mother the Virgin Mary, our Lady.

Third Point.—Consider the third reason the Church gives for the joy and glory of our Blessed Lady on this day, namely, that Christ arose as He had *promised*, and fulfilled His word with such promptitude that the third day was scarcely commenced when He came forth from the sepulchre, glorious and triumphant over death, and visited, as we have said, His most Holy Mother, whose joy was increased by the firm hope of arising also after death with a glory similar to that of her Son. Ponder how God keeps His word, and how faithful and punctual He is in its fulfilment beyond what we could desire. Encourage thyself by His promises to confide in His bounty, and to serve Him, seeing how different He is from men, who are all so false and deceitful, and who fail us when we confide most in their good will.

Fourth Point.—Consider the last joyous title that the Church gives our Lady, which is that of Advocate and Patron, that she may pray for us to God. For the most Holy Virgin prayed at the time of the sacred Passion for the apostles and disciples of the Lord, whose weakness grieved her; and after His Resurrection she interceded for them with her Blessed Son, that He might console and strengthen them in the faith, as He did. Consider the great joy she received at seeing them brought into the fold of the Church; and with the zeal

for the salvation of the world which burnt within her breast, she was gladdened by the thought of the fruit of souls which their preaching was everywhere to produce. O most Holy Virgin! by this ineffable joy that thou receivedst on this occasion, I beseech thee to pray for us all, and especially for me, as the most needy; and to beg of thy most sweet Son to console us all, to strengthen and enliven our faith and constancy in His service, and to communicate to us a taste of the great joy that thou receivedst, so that the sweetness of its flavour may cause us to despise all earthly delights, and only to aspire after heavenly and divine bliss for ever and ever. Amen.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Second Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOOD SHEPHERD.—(ST. JOHN X.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ, the Son of the living God, the Only-Begotten of the Eternal Father, came down from heaven to be the Shepherd of our souls, and of thine in particular; and being able to commit this ministry to an angel or other rational creature, He would not do otherwise than fulfil it Himself, to take charge of thee, to care for thy good, and to feed thee in His own Person. Ponder who God is, and what thou art, and what thou owest to so great a Lord; give Him a thousand thanks for this benefit, and prepare thyself, as far as thou canst, to serve Him eternally.

Second Point.—Consider how the office of the Good Shepherd is to feed His sheep, and that Christ so abundantly fulfils this duty that He has given them for food His own Body and for drink His own Blood. Other shepherds nourish themselves with the flesh and blood of their lambs, but Christ feeds His with His own Flesh

and Blood. Rejoice to have such a Shepherd ; give Him infinite thanks for so incomparable a mercy, and at the same time learn to care for thy sheep, and to feed them at the cost of thy sweat, and, if necessary, of thy blood, after the example of Christ, without demanding theirs.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that the good and true shepherd defends his lambs from the wolf, even to the laying down his life for them, whilst the hireling, whose the sheep are not, flies and leaves them defenceless to perish at the hands of their enemies. Christ is the true Shepherd, Who gave His life for His sheep, and always protects them from the ravishing wolves ; in which signal benefit thou hast great motive for gratitude to God ; it is of less moment that thou shouldst lose thy life at the hands of thine enemies than that the Lord should deliver Himself into the hands of His, and yet so great was His love that He gave His life for thee on the Cross. O Lord, how can I show my gratitude for so signal a mercy ? Oh, that I could lay down my life for Thee, as Thou didst Thine for me ! Learn not to be a hireling, and not to serve God and thy neighbour merely for thine interest, but for the glory of God and the good of souls, for whom thou shouldst give thy life if needful, after the example of Christ, who gave His for thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, as Christ is the Good Shepherd, so the devil, on the contrary, is the Evil Shepherd, who tries in all things to oppose Christ. Observe how each of these pastors cares for and feeds his sheep ; behold the very great difference that there is between the Good and the Evil Shepherd, and between the sheep of the one and those of the other ; and see to which of the two folds thou wouldst belong. Consider and weigh the manner in which Christ treats His sheep, giving them even His own Blood, and carrying them on His shoulders, and see the reward which He gives them in the end. Then consider how Satan behaves to the flock of his followers, treating them as slaves, and behaving with the utmost tyranny towards them, and at last precipitating

them in an instant into the abyss of hell, where, as David says, "Death shall feed upon them."¹ Beg of the Lord to receive thee into His fold, and not to loosen His hold of thee, nor permit thee to fall into the tyranny of Satan; resolving most firmly to be one of His sheep, and offering thyself to serve Him eternally.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE QUALITIES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

First Point.—Consider that a good shepherd watches over his flock, and by his care and vigilance his sheep repose and feed in security. Thus thou shouldst consider the care and vigilance God has for His Church, and for thee in particular, and how He watches over thy welfare and defends thee from thine enemies during thy sleep, in order that thou mayst repose securely. Ponder how many times thy foes would have cast thee into hell, had it not been for the vigilance and care with which this Good Shepherd protects thee; and draw hence, on the one hand, a sentiment of gratitude for the care He has of thee, recognising that to Him thou owest anew each day the life thou enjoyest, and, on the other, great confidence in His protection, to live secure in the service of such a Shepherd, Who defends thee to the laying down of His life for thee. Lastly, draw from His example a lesson to watch day and night over the flock or concerns committed to thee by God, sparing thyself no effort or labour for His love.

Second Point.—The good shepherd loves his sheep, and clothes himself with their skins, that they may love him; and so God loves His elect, and clothed Himself with our flesh to converse with us, and to be loved by

¹ Psalm xlviii.

us. Contemplate the greatness of this benefit, and of this mark of His love, and draw thence a feeling of most intense love of God, and a most firm determination to wear His livery, since He, for thy sake, clothed Himself in thine. Observe the bearing of the Good Shepherd, His manner of life, dress, food, and conversation; and see how thou art to imitate and follow Him, and offer thyself heartily to His service.

Third Point.—Christ says that, like a Good Shepherd, He knows His sheep, for He has counted them, and knows who and how many they are; and thou art one of them. Meditate slowly the knowledge God has of thee, and how He has thee ever present, and sees thee, and how neither the thoughts of thy mind nor the desires of thy heart are hidden from Him; henceforth, therefore, live as one to whom God is ever present as a witness of his actions. Consider that God sees thee, and perform all thine actions with regard to Him, never losing sight of Him, and directing them all to His greater glory and service.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that He has other sheep that are not of this fold, whom it is necessary He should bring, that all may be one fold and one Shepherd. In which words thou hast much to meditate and to learn: First, the great mercy that God has done thee in bringing thee into the fold of His Church, not leaving thee out of it with the pagans, infidels, and heretics, who all perish miserably. See what would have become of thee had God permitted thee to perish like so great a number of souls out of His Church, and cease not to give Him thanks and to render Him service for so signal a mercy. Secondly, He says that it is needful for Him to bring them, this need being that of the sheep and the interest theirs, which He considers as His own. Recognise His immense bounty and mercy, rejoice that such should be thy Good Shepherd, and offer Him all thy strength to serve Him in the ministry of souls, and to draw those of all the world to His knowledge; grieve for the many who lose themselves,

and beg of Him to send labourers and shepherds who shall gather together His flock, convert the unfaithful, and feed His lambs, that all may be one fold and one Shepherd.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE OTHER QUALITIES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

First Point.—Consider that the Good Shepherd both feeds and chastises His flock ; that He rules over it with the crook or staff, and also gives it pasture. In figure of which, as St. Gregory says, the Ark of the Testament contained the sweet manna of heaven and the rod of Moses, for in the breast of the Good Shepherd there must be the manna of gentleness, and, when needful, the rod of punishment. God, like the Good Shepherd, uses both in the treatment of His elect ; He gives them the sweetness of devotion, consolation, and prosperity, and also, when necessary, He uses the rod of rigour and chastisement to urge them on in His service. From which thou shouldst draw two things—on the one hand, a lesson how to govern thyself and those under thee, using gentleness or severity as occasion requires ; and, on the other hand, humility and resignation to the will of God, submitting to His rule, and accepting the chastisements, dryness, and toils that He may send thee with the same equanimity as consolation and prosperity when He bestows them.

Second Point.—The Good Shepherd carries with him myrrh and ointment for healing his lambs ; and so Christ supplied His Church with the Holy Sacraments, as medicines for our souls. Consider how easy they are, and how efficacious ; for, washed in the waters of baptism, our souls are cured of the leprosy of sin which they con-

tracted in Adam, much better than Naaman was purified of his in the waters of the Jordan. Compare this medicine with the bloody knife of the circumcision, and acknowledge the benignity of Christ and the gentle meekness of this Good Shepherd. Review in like manner the other sacraments, and giving the Lord thanks for them, take heed how thou shouldst use and profit by such salutary medicines; weep over the negligence thou hast until now shown in their use, and firmly purpose to amend for the future.

Third Point.—Consider how great a mercy is this that the Lord has done thee, and which He refused to the flock of the angels, though so exalted, when touched by the disease of pride; for the Lord did not grant to them medicine wherewith to recover the grace they had lost, but in the instant in which they sinned He cast them into hell. Consider what had been thy lot had God used thee as rigorously. What would not the devils give to-day for this medicine, or for one more powerful, however laborious and painful might be its use, to cure their ills, to restore their lost health, and to bring them back to the grace of God and the inheritance of glory. Doubtless there is nothing so arduous or so painful that they would not eagerly and gratefully embrace to obtain this benefit. Endeavour with all possible earnestness to prize the mercy that God has done thee; be not ungrateful for His benefits, lest He deprive thee of them, but make use of these spiritual medicines, for such was the intention of the Lord when He instituted them for thy welfare.

Fourth Point.—Consider of what the myrrh of these medicines is composed; not of herbs nor of the sap of trees, nor of the roots of the earth, nor of the essence of flowers, but of the most precious Blood of Christ, Who, like a Good Shepherd, opened His veins and gave it to heal thy wounds and cure thy infirmities. This was the balsam, as St. Bernard says, that the Tree of Life gave for the restoration of thy life. He chose to be wounded and torn to heal thy wounds and sores with the balsam of

His Blood. O Lord, to what an excess has the tenderness of Thy love gone towards one who has so greatly offended Thee, since Thou hast done more for me than I could have imagined or asked of Thee! Ponder of what sort would be the charity of a man, who, seeing another sick and incurable, should open his own veins with a knife, and shed his blood, and remain lacerated in order to heal the wounds of his friend, and what gratitude would be due for so tender a love from him who was its object. Draw hence what thou owest to God, and how little it is that thou dost and endurest for Him; behold thy infirmities and the disease of thy evil habits; and since thou hast such a Physician and Shepherd, cast thyself at His Feet, humbly beseeching Him to heal thee, to cure thee of thy infirmities, and to purify thy soul of the leprosy of sin, that thou mayst be pleasing to Him, and worthy to enter the fold of His glory in the company of His elect.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE QUALITIES THAT SHOULD DISTINGUISH THE
CHOSEN LAMBS OF CHRIST'S FOLD.

First Point.—The first quality is that which Christ mentions in the Gospel, namely, that as He knows all the lambs of His flock, so they know Him for their own Shepherd. Place thy hand on thy breast, and see whether thou knowest and lovest Him as thou shouldst, and whether thy heart is occupied with Him, or whether it spends itself on the worthless things of this world. Humble thyself in His presence, beg of Him light to know Him, and grace to love Him as thou art bound to do, withdrawing thy heart from all that is earthly to fix it on thy Creator.

Second Point.—The second quality Christ mentions is the obedience of His lambs to His voice. "They hear My voice," He says, that is, they follow and obey it, travelling the way I direct them. Take heed and consider how many calls the Divine Pastor has given thee for the salvation of thy soul, and how often He touches thy heart, inviting thee to greater perfection, to leave vice and follow virtue; and thou turnest a deaf ear and answerest not His voice. Weep for thy past blindness, beg His pardon with tears, and dispose thyself to hear and obey Him in whatever He may command thee, lest thou fall into the hands of the infernal wolves and into eternal death.

Third Point.—Consider how the sheep belong not to themselves, but to their shepherd, to whom, as their rightful owner, they render all they have, their milk, their young, their wool, and lastly themselves; in which thou hast clear demonstration that thou art to possess nothing as thine, but as belonging to thy Master, Who is God. Whatever thou dost, or hast, thy property, goods, strength, knowledge, talent, intellect, thy memory, thy will, and lastly thy life and thyself, as of a sheep of His flock nourished by His blood—all is His. Cast thyself at His feet, and say to Him from the depth of thy heart: My Shepherd and my Master, all that I am and have, my soul, my body, my life, and all my powers, works, words, and thoughts, all are Thine; dispose of me as of a sheep of Thy flock, and give me grace to deserve to belong to it, having nothing of my own, all being Thine, and myself wholly dedicated to and ready for Thy service.

Fourth Point.—The last quality of sheep is that they leave not their shepherd, but follow him resignedly, showing no resistance or opposition, but only extreme meekness and patience, even though he lead them to death, which they accept at his hand. In like manner the lambs of Christ's fold, and those who are His faithful servants, follow Him meekly, and carry their cross after

Him, travelling with equanimity to death, if need be, to lay down their life for His love. To this degree of love thou must attain if thou wouldst belong to the chosen flock of the Lord. Prepare thyself to suffer, take up thy cross, and follow Him in the trials that assail thee, offering thyself to carry it valiantly ; for if thou be His companion on this road, thou wilt also share with Him the crown of heaven.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE APPARITIONS CHRIST MADE TO HIS APOSTLES
DURING THE FORTY DAYS PREVIOUS TO HIS ASCEN-
SION—(ACTS I.)

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that, for forty days before ascending into heaven, Christ appeared many times to His disciples, speaking to them of the kingdom of God. In which thou shouldst ponder, in the first place, that Christ compensated for the three days' absence of His Passion and death by forty days of His glory, appearing to His disciples, and visiting them in His risen and glorious state, consoling and encouraging them in their orphanhood, and promising them the Holy Spirit to remain always with them. From which thou hast to draw very great confidence in God in thy drynesses and labours, knowing that for each day of His absence He will compensate shortly by many of assistance and spiritual comfort. Hope in the Lord and do good, and thou wilt experience the grace of His consolation.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ appeared to the disciples, as St. Luke says, not only alive, but glorious ; communicating to them a share of His glory, and encouraging them, by His example and words, to labour in

His service, and to endure all trials patiently for His love. Contemplate the care that, as a solicitous Shepherd, He has of His chosen ones, and how He teaches thee to care for His interests, and specially for His lambs, even though thou be raised to the highest dignities ; learn also how, at all times and on all occasions, God visits His elect, never neglecting a single one. Beg of Him not to forget thee, but to visit and console thee with His presence in the manner that may best serve His glory and the good of thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider what St. Luke says—namely, that during these visits He always spoke of the kingdom of God, in order to enkindle a lively desire of it in their hearts. These are the conversations thou shouldst hold in the visits thou makest and receivest, speaking always of the kingdom of God, and of spiritual things which lead to Him, and banishing from thy lips all vain conversations, which are of no profit to the soul. Beg of the Lord to grant thee this favour, and meditate in His presence how thou canst fulfil this resolution with the aid of His grace, which He refuses to no one who disposes himself to receive it.

Fourth Point.—These forty days are, as St. Austin tells us, a symbol of the lives of the just, during which our Redeemer assists them invisibly, and visits them frequently, consoling them, encouraging, and guiding them on the way to heaven. From which thou shouldst derive great consolation, knowing that the Lord assists thee ; and great energy to perform all good works, knowing that thou hast His grace, with the aid of which nothing is difficult ; for all things are possible and easy, as St. Paul himself experienced, in Him who strengthens us.¹ Turn thine eyes to the Lord who assists thee, beg of Him to comfort and succour thee in all thine actions, and to give thee counsel and courage, as He did to His apostles, and thou wilt feel in all things the effect of His Divine favour.

¹ Philip. iv. 13.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE ARGUMENTS AND REASONS BY WHICH CHRIST
PROVED HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION—(ACTS I.)

First Point.—St. Luke says, that for the space of forty days before ascending into heaven, Christ appeared many times to His disciples, proving to them, by many arguments and reasons, the truth of His Resurrection, and the opportuneness and importance thereof. In which thou shouldst observe the value our Saviour placed on this article of faith, since He remained so many days, and came so many times to His apostles, to persuade them of it, and to banish from their hearts any shadow of doubt that might remain there. From which thou shouldst draw great esteem of this doctrine of the Resurrection, and no less gratitude to the Saviour for having risen, and given thee knowledge and faith of this mystery, which thou shouldst contemplate and meditate many times, taking part in it, rejoicing at His glory, and encouraging thyself, by the sight of it, to love and serve Him, and to suffer for His love in the hope of thy resurrection.

Second Point.—Consider that these arguments were not only of words, bringing forward reasons, and quoting the Scriptures to prove their truth ; but they were also of deeds, which are more efficacious, showing His wounds to His apostles, and eating with them, giving Himself to be handled, risen and glorious, and at the same time producing in their souls ineffable joy and peace, and a celestial sweetness and delight. These are the most powerful arguments to convince the minds and attract the hearts of men to the truth : we cannot deny what we see ; and, as Seneca says, example is more powerful than words. Whence thou shouldst learn to preach more by the former than by the latter. If thou wouldst honour

God and be useful to thy neighbour, learn to use works more than words, giving such an example of life that all those who see thee may learn from the disciple the perfection of the Master, and so may praise the Lord our God. Place thy hand on thy breast, and see whether thou hast attracted thy neighbour to the knowledge and service of God, or deterred Him from it, by the example of thy past life. Humble thyself before God, and weep over the scandal thou hast given, and the souls that have been lost through thee : beg of the Lord with tears grace to repair the past, and to give such an example of life as may be for the edification of all.

Third Point.—Consider the evidences that Christ gave of the Resurrection, the first of which was to lay aside the winding-sheet, and clothe Himself with the properties of glory that the blessed enjoy, entering amongst His disciples, the doors being shut, manifesting Himself impassible, subtile, and resplendent. Thou also shouldst arise from the death of sin to the life of grace, and from thy lukewarmness to fervour ; for, as St. Paul says, Christ arose for the glory of the Father, and so we must arise to a new life, and give proof of it, leaving the swathing-bands of evil customs and earthly affections, banishing the darkness of evil counsels which have obscured the light of the heart, and clothing ourselves with a high esteem for spiritual concerns, and for the light and counsels of our superiors, despising all things here below, and aspiring after things celestial.

Fourth Point.—Another proof by action was the showing His wounds, giving them to be touched, eating with His disciples, and manifesting Himself alive in their presence. All this was for thy good ; for which give Him infinite thanks, at the same time striving to imitate Him by the resurrection and renovation of thy life, endeavouring that it may be such as shall be patent to all, and that all may see and experience its effects. See for how many years thou hast been amongst men as one dead, carrying in a living body a soul dead to God and

to His grace ; and change thy life, dying to the world and living to Christ. He gave proof of His Resurrection by eating with His disciples ; thou shouldst give it by frequenting His Table, and disposing thyself to receive Him worthily ; and as Christ showed His wounds, thou shouldst show those of thy penance, mortification, and patience, suffering pains and wounds for His love, as He bore them for thine. O my Lord ! would that I were able and knew how to arise to a new and immortal life, never more to return to the death of sin. This, Lord, is not a work for me, but for Thine almighty arm : work in me this wonder, raising me up from death to a life of high perfection, that I may be able to serve Thee as I ought ; and may the angels and seraphim and all creatures glorify Thee for endless ages.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider the words which Christ would use to prove His Resurrection to His disciples, and the reasons He would give them in evidence thereof ; amongst which the words of the Holy Scriptures would hold the first place, proving to them, by the testimony of many of the prophets, that He had to die and rise again, and showing, as St. Luke relates in his Gospel, how already were accomplished in Him the things prophesied of the Messiah by the ancients. Listen to the words of Christ ; consider how in His Person were fulfilled all the prophecies concerning Him ; and draw thence, first, great faith in the Word of God, and a high esteem for it when pronounced by the lips of His doctors and preachers, by whose voice He teaches us the

Catholic Faith and the road to heaven. Secondly, that as in Christ were accomplished all the things determined by God and written by the prophets, in like manner will be fulfilled in thee those things that God has decreed according to His holy and divine will, to which thou shouldst bow down, saying over and over again, "Lord, Thy will be done in me ; and may all that Thou hast disposed and ordained concerning me be accomplished."

Second Point.—The second reason was because, as our Lord Himself said, it behoved that He should suffer, and should then enter His glory, and that He should arise from the dead to reward His Body, which had suffered so much for men. From this argument thou shouldst draw a desire of great patience and mortification, persuading thyself that it behoves thee to suffer in order to merit the heavenly crown, and that if Christ had to enter the glory which belonged to Him, as the Son and Heir of God, by the Cross and by patience, so by these also is it necessary that thou shouldst enter the glory which is not thine. Enter into account with thyself, and, in the presence of God, see what patience and mortification thou hast hitherto manifested, and what title thou hast to ask for heaven ; and rouse thyself for the future to carry thy cross in company with the Saviour, in order to be crowned with Him.

Third Point.—Another reason was in order to encourage our hope by the reward of the Resurrection ; for, as St. Paul says, if Christ had not risen again, our hope in our own resurrection would fail us, and we should believe that our bodies were to return to earth without recovering life and rising again to receive the reward of their labours. To encourage this faith and confidence Christ rose again, and manifested Himself glorified to His disciples, teaching them that in like manner they would arise again, as will also all who imitate His life. See with the eyes of thy soul Christ risen, glorified, and more luminous than the sun ; contemplate delibe-

rately His glory, and how His sufferings had an end, but His glory shall have none. Consider that a like reward awaits thee if thou imitate Him in thy actions; and arouse thyself energetically to serve Him, and to suffer for His love with the hope of so great a reward.

Fourth Point.—There was yet another reason for the Resurrection of the Saviour, which was to show His omnipotence and display His charity. He showed His omnipotence in raising His dead Body by His power, demonstrating in action the word He had spoken, that He had power to assume His soul, to lay it down and to take it up again, as was seen in His death and Resurrection. He displayed His charity in raising up with Himself many saints, who came into the city and appeared to many, as St. Matthew says,¹ and were unimpeachable witnesses of His Resurrection, all of whom would doubtless, in the first place, come to the Most Holy Virgin, and would congratulate her on the Resurrection of her priceless Son. Linger on this most sweet thought, and draw thence sweet honey of devotion for thy soul; recognise the divine omnipotence, and that nothing is impossible to God's power and will, and quicken thy hope of all thou needest from His hand with the confidence of obtaining it. See also how He hastened the time of the Resurrection, and, without waiting for the last day, recalled to life the saints who arose with Him. Confide in His compassion that thou wilt obtain what thou askest, even though it be necessary therefore to hasten the time of His mercy; learn likewise to be charitable to thy brethren, and not to limit the good thou dost to times and places. Beg of the Lord this grace by that which He did these saints; make them thine advocates, and He will grant it to thee abundantly.

¹ Matt. xxvii.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the third Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY—(JOHN XVI.)

This Gospel contains a brief discourse that Christ made to His disciples before going to suffer, in which He told them that in a short time they would lose sight of Him, and in a short time they would see Him again; and knowing that they wished to question Him on His meaning, He declared it to them, and told them that He spoke of His departure for heaven, which would cause them sorrow, but that in a short time He would see them again, and would fill their hearts with a joy which none could take from them.

First Point.—Consider the sorrow that Christ felt at being obliged to leave His disciples, and the words with which He consoles them, saying that He will see them again in a short time, and that their hearts shall be bathed with joy at His sight. Enter by meditation into that loving breast, and contemplate the flames of charity that burn therein; rejoice to have so sweet and loving a Father; see how thou canst correspond to so great a love, and beg a spark of that fire wherewith to inflame thy heart.

Second Point.—Consider how brief are God's absences and how certain are His consolations; for if He withdraws from us, it is for a short time, and then He comes with haste and redoubled consolations. Let not thy heart fail thee if He sometimes leaves thee or hides Himself from thy soul, but rather hope that in His mercy He will soon revisit thee, as He did His disciples, and will bathe thy soul with ineffable joy and heavenly consolations.

Third Point.—Consider how the disciples understood not at first the words of Christ, for perchance, though He speak to us, we comprehend not what He teaches; but the Lord explained Himself further to them, answer-

ing beforehand the doubt they had not yet expressed. O Lord, how Thou preventest us with Thy mercies, for Thou grantest them even before they are asked. Blessed be Thou a thousand times for Thy great mercy and liberality. Give me a great confidence in Thee, and make me as liberal in doing good to my neighbours as Thou art in Thy mercy towards me.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that His disciples were to be made sad by His departure, although it were but for a short time, and that they would rejoice at His return; for there is nothing so sad as the absence of God, nor so joyful as His visitation. As the absence of the sun causes dismal darkness to the earth and its presence joyful light, in like manner the absence of God causes clouds of sadness to envelop the soul, whilst His presence brings the light of great joy and delight. O my soul! lose not thy God, for then, even hadst thou the whole world, thou wouldst remain in most dismal darkness, but if thou possess Him and if He visit thy house, His presence alone will bathe it in delight. O Lord, chastise me not so severely as to withdraw from me, even for a single moment; let me lose everything rather than lose Thee; be Thou with me, for better is one day in Thy house than millions of millions in the habitations of the world.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE SHORTNESS OF THIS LIFE AND THE ETERNITY
OF THE LIFE TO COME.

First Point.—Consider what St. Augustin teaches, namely, that the little while of which Christ speaks means the duration of this life, which, compared with eternity, is like a breath, and its duration so short that

it seems but a moment. To convince thyself of this, place in one scale the longest life, be it of a hundred or two hundred years, and in the other the future and eternal life, and thou wilt see that, however long it be, this life fades like a shadow and appears as nothing in proportion to the future and eternal life. Dive into this eternity, and draw from its consideration a firm resolution to despise this worthless and perishable life, and to covet the one that is eternal and which shall never end ; lose not that which is of such value for what lasts so short a time ; and if, as St. Austin says, thou dost undergo so much labour to live a few days in this world, why wilt thou not undergo far more to live eternally in the next, the days of this life being short and evil, whilst those of the other are innumerable and blessed. Resolve then to suffer in this short life for Christ in order to rejoice with Him eternally in the next. All the suffering of this life is but little ; and, as St. Paul says, a moment of suffering here achieves for us a weight of eternal glory hereafter.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ says that the world will rejoice and His servants will weep in this life ; but once this short drama ended, the parts will be changed ; the wicked will weep eternally and the good will rejoice for ever. Remember that there are not two glories, and that, as St. Bernard tells us, it is almost impossible to enjoy bliss both here and hereafter ; that those who enjoy it here are deprived of it hereafter, whilst those who here do penance and mortify themselves rejoice in the next life. Consider deliberately which of the two thou wouldst possess, for if thou give thyself up now to the delights, pleasures, honours, and applause of the world, thou wilt lose future glory ; and if, despising these, thou dost embrace the Cross and penance, and live in silence and humility, thou wilt obtain eternal felicity. Chose now, therefore, that which later thou wouldst wish to have chosen : beg grace of the Lord to abandon vice, to embrace virtue, and to make up thy mind to follow Him resolutely on the way of the Cross.

Third Point.—Consider how deluded are they who, for the sake of spending pleasantly the brief space of this life, lose eternal delights, and how deceived they will find themselves at the hour of death and at the judgment-seat of God, when they see all their enjoyments and pleasures pass away like the wind, and they find themselves condemned to suffer for ever ; how joyful, on the contrary, will the just then be to see their labours and penances past and their repose and glory begun ! The siren is represented as singing all her life and dying in bitter grief ; the swan, on the contrary, weeps during life and sings at the time of death ; thus on a life of pleasure follows a mournful deathbed, whilst a sorrowful life has a joyful ending. The siren symbolises the wicked and the swan the good ; one of these two fates must necessarily be thine ; see now, whilst thou hast time, which thou wouldst choose at the hour of death. Be not blinded by the present ; but rather be wise and prudent, and provide for the future ; ask the Lord to give thee strength to choose at once the better part, and that which is for His greater glory and the good of thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ tells us that “ A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, . . . but when she hath brought forth a child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” Thus the joy of the just in glory is so great that it effaces the memory of their past toils. Fix thine eyes on the saints in bliss, contemplate their glory, and see how utterly forgotten are the labours and penances that they endured in this life ; see how they rejoice in the next, and will rejoice eternally ; how for no imaginable consideration would they return to this world or change their happy condition. Urge thyself by their example to live holily, and follow in their footsteps and in those of thy Redeemer and Master ; for if thou be their companion in the fight, thou wilt also share with them the crown of glory.

*TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE PROMISES HE MAKES IN
THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVI.)

First Point.—Consider what St. John Chrysostom says, namely, that the little time of which Christ speaks, during which He says His disciples will not see Him, is the time of His Passion; and He calls it little and short, or an “hour;” as is said by St. John, “Jesus knowing that His hour was come;” that is, the hour of His Passion; for although they were so many and so bitter, yet the greatness of His love was such, that it all seemed to Him little to suffer for man. Lay stress on the consideration of this point, and praise and extol the immense charity of the Saviour, who so loved and esteemed thee and suffered so much for thee. Give Him many thanks for it, and be ashamed in His presence, seeing thy tepidity and pusillanimity, that thou hast not courage to suffer for Him, and that every effort thou hast to make for His sake appears to thee great and insupportable. Blush at the complaints thou indulgest in and the little fortitude thou dost exhibit; entreat our Lord to bestow on thee one spark of the fire of love that burns in His breast, in order to suffer much with joy for Him.

Second Point.—Meditate on those words of David in the 125th Psalm, “Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves.” Ponder with St. Jerome how we sow little and with grief, and gather much and with joy. For when the overflowing fruit of that which was sown is reaped abundantly, then is the labour and cost of the sowing accounted well spent. Now is the time for the sowing, and death is the time for reaping the fruits of the works done in life; each one shall reap

what he has sown. If any one sow the thorns of evil works, then shall he reap pains and torments ; but if he sow the seed of good and holy actions, then shall he reap the fruit of eternal life, with such great increase that it shall be as a hundred for one. Little wilt thou have to labour, and the harvest will be great. Think on this, and resolve to work with fervour in the vineyard of the Lord during the short remainder of thy life, and at thy death thou shalt reap abundant fruits of glory.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ says in the Gospel, that a woman in giving birth to a child has pain and grief, and shows regret that she has conceived on account of the suffering she endures ; but that hour being past, she forgets her resolve and bears other children. Consider thence how many good resolutions of serving God and amending thy life thou hast conceived in times of sickness and suffering ; but that time past, thou hast forgotten them, and continued thine evil habits as before. Weep over thine inconstancy ; beg of God the grace to begin to serve Him with fortitude and perseverance to the end ; and if thou be faithful to thy promises, thou shalt experience His most liberal favours.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which Christ winds up His discourse, “ I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.” Here thou shouldst ponder the certainty of eternal happiness, and its continuance without decrease or diminution ; for its very greatness would be painful unless it were enjoyed with security and without fear of forfeiture or termination. Meditate deeply this promise, and compare the delights of heaven with those of this earth, the joys God reserves for His servants with those the world offers to its followers ; see how frail and short-lived are these latter, how great and eternal are the former, and take heart from this consideration to cast aside all that the world can bestow, and to covet only what God promises.

*TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE GLORY OF THE SOUL OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

First Point.—Consider how immense, sublime, and incomprehensible must have been the glory of the Soul of Christ our Lord, the co-equal Son of God, and as such hypostatically united to the Divinity, which It saw and enjoyed intimately from the first instant of His conception ; and in this respect, as well as in the brightness and clearness of Its vision of God, and in all others, It exceeds all the angels and saints of heaven by all the distance that exists between a son by nature and a son by adoption. Wherefore this most Holy Soul enjoys such glory as far surpasses all that can be imagined ; for if, as Isaias says, and St. John repeats, “The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for the least of His elect,” what must be the glory He determined and prepared for the greatest of all, Who is Jesus Christ ? Beg of God to give thee one ray of His light wherewith to comprehend some small portion of that felicity, and to relish it in union with the Lord Himself.

Second Point.—Consider the greatness and sovereignty of this glory and beatitude of the Soul of Christ ; not alone as regards the essential part of the beatific vision, by which it comprehends, as far as is possible to a creature, the essence of God, but also on account of the accidental glory which from so many sources augments the mighty river of its beatitude. For it sees and knows in God all the past, the present, and the future of all things possible ; all the attributes and the greatness of the Divinity ; all the good and holy works that have been and are being performed ; the many souls that

abandon sin and are saved by the merits of the Blood of Christ ; and all these things increase Its glory, together with the praises that It receives from all the heavenly courtiers and from all creatures. Contemplate the Soul of this Lord as a resplendent sun bathed in brilliant light, or as an immense ocean augmented by the currents of many and abundant streams. Consider the greatness of Its capacity, the intensity of Its glory ; rejoice with Its joy, and give God millions of millions of thanks for the graces He has given to this soul, enriching It with so many and such high degrees of glory.

Third Point.—Contemplate the delight that all the heavenly courtiers, both angels and men, and in particular the Queen of Angels, receive from the glory of Christ, and the congratulations that they offer to His most Holy Soul, and how they rejoice in Its glory ; join thou with them to enjoy it, and to offer Him thanks and congratulations for it, and ponder the thanks that the Soul of the Saviour Itself gave to the Eternal Father for the graces He bestowed on It, and is continually giving to Him, with unutterable gratitude and delight.

Fourth Point.—Lay stress on the consideration of the means by which the Soul of the Saviour arrived at this greatness of glory and beatitude, which increased that which was essential to Him, and which It received liberally from the mighty hand of God. Review the acts of highest merit which It performed during the whole of His life, and learn to merit and obtain some degree of the infinite glory to which it attained.

*TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE GLORY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

First Point.—Contemplate in like manner the glory of the Body of the Saviour, more beautiful than the light, more resplendent than the sun through the qualities of impassibility, agility, subtilty, and luminousness which above all the blessed in heaven It possesses in the most perfect degree. Behold Him in the centre of the throne of glory illuminating and glorifying the heavens far more than the sun does the earth, as was seen by St. John, and all the heavenly courtiers giving Him praise and singing psalms and canticles of glory. Consider what must be His glory from whom the inhabitants of heaven derive their bliss, which is increased by the vision of their Lord glorified by such beatitude; and draw hence affections of joy and satisfaction at the sight of thy Redeemer surrounded by such immense glory and majesty.

Second Point.—Recapitulate the five senses and then the interior faculties of the Saviour, and meditate the felicity and glory which He enjoys in each one of them. How His eyes are recreated by the sight of His own glory; His ears by the music and the praises of the choirs of angels and the saints in paradise; His sense of smell by perfumes sweeter than we can imagine; His taste by the savour of beatitude; His touch by all celestial delights. Behold His imagination glorified by the image of God and of all creatures in their highest perfection, His memory satisfied and rejoiced by the presence of all things desirable. Consider how His understanding is glorified by the contemplation of God as He is in Himself, and His will by loving Him intimately without fear of losing Him. Oh, glory of glories and light in-

comprehensible ! Blessed be thou, O Lord, Who hast merited such glory ; let all creatures praise and bless Thee for the glory Thou enjoyest. Would that I had the tongues of all creatures wherewith to praise and bless Thee for endless ages.

Third Point.—Consider, moreover, the prerogatives that Christ enjoys in heaven above all the blessed, as Lord of the angels, as Redeemer and Judge of men, Advocate of sinners, and Chief of the human race, and as eternal Priest and sovereign Pontiff. Contemplate the greatness and value of His merits on account of the hypostatical union with the Word, as well as of the infinite grace He possessed, and of the perfection with which He merited the crowns of martyr, virgin, doctor, and teacher of the universe. On which account St. John¹ said he saw Him, “and on His head were many diadems,” all of which contribute to increase the ocean of His glory ; and if any one of these titles suffices to render the just supremely happy and blessed, with what an ocean of infinite delight must not so many and such excellent titles have inundated Christ our Lord ! Join the angels in their admiration of His greatness and felicity, rejoice with them in His beatitude, and beg Him to extend His Hand to thee that thou mayst ascend to it.

Fourth Point.—Consider the steps by which the Saviour ascended to merit this glory ; review His holy life, meditating His actions and virtues, the interior as well as the exterior ones, and endeavour to imitate His example in this world in order to enjoy Him in the next.

¹ Apoc. xix.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS ELECT.

First Point.—Consider the intense desire that Christ had for the happiness of mankind, all that He did for that end, what He suffered for the salvation of men, and how often and with what earnestness He prayed for them. And if, as St. Austin says, the joy afforded by the possession of a thing is proportioned to the extent of the desire we have of it, thou canst thence estimate the joy of Christ at beholding the vast number of the elect who, through His merits, are in the fruition of glory, and that which He experiences each time that a soul enters heaven. Rejoice at the joy of thy Saviour, and endeavour to be one of the elect in order to increase His glory ; weep over that of which He is deprived by those who are condemned through their own perversity, and entreat the Lord to send apostolical preachers to direct them in the road to heaven.

Second Point.—The vision of each one of the blessed is a sight so delightful and pleasing that it increases the glory of those who behold it ; ponder then how greatly that of Christ must be increased by the number of the elect, who all enjoy heaven through His merits ; the more so, that He not only knows clearly the degrees of essential as well as of accidental glory which each one enjoys, but also that He loves each and all most tenderly. Moreover, each is resplendent with the merits of His Blood, and He gathers in them abundant fruits of His labours, as did St. Paul¹ in the faithful he converted, for which reason he calls them “ my joy and my crown ; ” and such they will be to Christ in glory, and He will have as many crowns as there are blessed in heaven. Enkindle in thy

¹ Philip. iv.

heart a fervent zeal for the salvation of souls in order that the Lord may be glorified through them.

Third Point.—Consider, that if a good son receives honour and glory from the honour of his parents, what glory must not Christ enjoy and possess eternally from the glory of His most Holy Mother, and how well spent He considers all His labours in order to see her raised to so sublime a throne of bliss. Ponder also that which the most Blessed Virgin must receive from the sight of her Son thus glorified and honoured above all creatures; see how those two celestial luminaries, like unto the sun and the moon, reflect on each other in heaven, and reciprocally augment each other's glory and resplendency, the glory of Christ being increased by the sight of Mary's, and hers likewise augmented by the vision of Christ. Gaze thou on both, contemplate Their glory, and earnestly entreat Them to allow thee to participate therein.

Fourth Point.—Consider the glory that Christ receives from that of His apostles, and then from that of the martyrs, and thus review all the companies of the blessed. Observe how Christ thanks His Eternal Father for the mercy He has shown them as though it had been exhibited towards Himself, offering it all to His honour and glory. Delight in the beatitude of this Lord; give Him great praise, and direct all thou dost to His honour and glory.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE GLORY THAT CHRIST AND HIS BLESSED MOTHER
RECEIVE FROM THAT OF ST. JOSEPH.

ALTHOUGH, as was said in the previous Meditation, Christ our Lord receives great increase of glory from that of all the saints; yet, as in heaven all are not equal, but

differ from each other in degrees of glory as star from star in magnitude and brilliancy, so likewise does the Redeemer of the world receive greater delight from those that are higher in glory. Thus it cannot be denied but that He must receive a great increase of glory from that of the glorious St. Joseph, both on account of his great glory and also because of his having been Christ's foster-father on earth, and every son must experience joy and contentment from the honour his father receives.

First Point.—Consider first the sanctity and merits of the glorious St. Joseph, whom God chose for the worthy spouse of His Holy Mother and His own reputed father. Ponder how great were his humility, his meekness, his charity; how ardent the love of God and of his neighbour that burnt within his breast; how great were his patience and obedience in so many travels and journeys that he undertook for Christ's sake; how intense was the love he bore to Christ and to the Holy Virgin; and to what high degrees of sanctity and conformity to the will of God his most holy soul attained. For God, searching through all ages, past, present, and future, chose the glorious St. Joseph from amongst all men as a spouse for the Blessed Virgin suitable to her in holiness and manner of life: a helpmate (*adjutorium simile sibi*), a companion, and coadjutor most similar to herself. Give thanks to Heaven for what was wrought in this holy patriarch; rejoice at his beatitude, and beg God to render thee like unto him as he was made like unto his Holy Spouse, and ask of the Blessed Virgin to intercede for thee that thy desire may be fulfilled.

Second Point.—Consider the glorious St. Joseph in heaven both in body and soul, for it is most probable that, as grave authors affirm, he was one of the saints who arose again with Christ, and that he was taken up by Him triumphantly into heaven, and thus, as he was like the Blessed Virgin in virtue, so also was he similar in merits and in the glory which he received in heaven, which is so great that we may believe that, after that of

Christ and of His most Holy Mother, his is the greatest or one of the greatest in heaven. Contemplate his beatitude; behold him crowned and favoured by Christ, by Whose side he sits on the throne of glory; offer him a thousand congratulations, rejoice at his felicity, and beg of him to bear thee in mind in order to favour thee and obtain graces for thee from the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the glory that Christ receives from beholding His adopted father in so high a degree of glory, that which the Blessed Virgin likewise experiences from the same cause, and also that which St. Joseph himself enjoys from the vision of theirs; what congratulations they offer each other, and how unutterably intense is their delight. For if a son rejoices at the honour and good fortune of his parents, and a father considers as his own that of his son, and a spouse that of her spouse, how can it be doubted that, united as were these holy lovers by the bond of closest charity on earth but yet more in heaven, each must consider as his own the beatitude of the others; and thus the glory of St. Joseph increases that of Christ and of His Blessed Mother, whilst theirs augments his, each rejoicing most cordially in the beatitude of the others in proportion as they love, know, esteem, and desire each other's felicity. Oh, happy lovers! oh, immense charity! oh, ineffable glory! oh, blissful delight! Praised, blessed, and glorified be God in His saints, and glorified also be the saints themselves in God for ever and ever.

Fourth Point.—Having considered all this, turn thine eyes on thyself, and meditate the steps by which the glorious patriarch St. Joseph rose to this glory, and see how thou shouldst imitate him in order to obtain some share in it. Beg him to assist thee to follow him. Beseech God to extend His hand towards thee, and to grant thee grace to reproduce His virtues in thy soul. Implore the Queen of Heaven to obtain them for thee by her intercession; for with such patrons thou mayst be very confident of obtaining a happy issue to thy petition.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the fourth Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVI.)

St. John tells us how Christ, being about to return to His Eternal Father, consoled His disciples by telling them that it was for their good that He left them, because He would send them the Holy Spirit, Who would bear witness to Him and convince the world of its wickedness, and at the same time would instruct them in those things which until then He had been unable to teach them.

First Point.—Consider how Christ came into the world in obedience to His Father, and having accomplished the work of redemption for which He came, He returns, likewise in obedience to the Father Who sent Him. Wherein He teaches thee what submission thou shouldst exhibit towards thy superiors, and how expedient it is to undertake no great work in the service of God or of souls except in obedience to him who stands in God's place with regard to us, and how all such works should begin from him, and the accomplishment thereof be referred to him. Learn this lesson with regard to all thine actions, and beg of the Lord to give thee grace to serve Him by them and to refer them all to His honour and glory.

Second Point.—Consider how sad the disciples were at hearing that Christ was about to depart and leave them; for as it is difficult to uproot a tree which is planted in the earth, so the love of Christ which had taken root in the hearts of the disciples caused them great sorrow when He withdrew from them. Place thy hand on thy heart and observe whether thou dost grieve at His absences, and whether thou sorrowest when He leaves thee dry and without devotion. Weep over thy want of love for Him and the coldness of thy heart in His service. Behold, on the other hand, how rooted thou art in the

perishable things of this earth, since thou dost regret so much any loss of property or diminution of honour, health, or convenience ; and for a slight interest thou wouldst move the earth and dost grow angry or disquieted. Cleanse thy heart of these earthly affections, and fix it on God alone and on heavenly things.

Third Point.—Consider the benignity with which the Saviour consoled His disciples, telling them that He was going to His Father in order to send them the Holy Spirit, and that it was all for their good. Let such great goodness ravish thy heart, and rejoice at having such a Master, so holy, so benign, so pitiful, so loving, and so great a benefactor to His elect. Beg of Him not to leave thee disconsolate by His absence, but to console and strengthen thee by sending His Holy Spirit the Comforter to thee, as He promised to do to His apostles.

Fourth Point.—Consider those last words with which He took leave of them, “I have yet many things to say to you : but you cannot bear them now ; but when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth.” Observe the prudence and benignity of the Saviour, Who would not overladden them with precepts, but taking account of their capacity, gave them such as were suitable for that time, reserving the rest for afterwards, when they should have received the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit ; for His yoke is sweet, and the burthen of His law light,¹ and proportional to the strength of man. Say not that it is heavy, since He so sweetly measures it to our powers ; the world burthens its lovers without pity or measure with intolerable burthens, wherewith it destroys, wastes, and overstrains their strength and health ; but God always lays on us less than we are able to carry, and sends His aid to alleviate and sweeten our labour. Give Him many thanks for this ; take courage to bear the sweet yoke of His law, and learn not to burthen thy neighbours with irksome laws and commands disproportioned to their strength.

¹ Matt. xi.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE DISCOURSE OF CHRIST TO HIS APOSTLES
(JOHN XVI.)

First Point.—Christ says that He goes to the Father : consider where He goes and whither He directs all His steps, namely, to His Eternal Father, towards whom He directed them from the time He set foot on earth until He left this world, drawing ever nearer to Him whom He so loved and desired to please. Consider whither thou directest thy steps, whether thou travellest towards God and drawest nearer to Him, or to the vanity of the world and towards that which thou shouldst fly from and despise. Beg of Him to admit thee into His society, and to grant thee grace to abandon the crooked paths of the world and to direct all thy steps towards God.

Second Point.—Consider how lovingly Christ complained to His disciples that, having told them that He was going away, no one asked Him whither He was going or to whom. Wherein He shows how He likes to be questioned by His disciples on His mysteries and on the stages of His holy life, and that we should take Him for our Master, questioning Him and learning from Him as disciples. Draw hence fervent desires of questioning Him and consulting Him in all thy doubts, of having Him for thy Master, of meditating the various passages of His life, and of learning at His school the road to heaven.

Third Point.—Consider the silence of the disciples and the respect they had for their Master, since no one dared to ask Him whither He was going ; but He did not, therefore, leave them without notice of His departure, taking into account their humility and timidity. Whence thou shouldst learn the demeanour that becomes thee

with regard to thy superiors ; the respect in which thou shouldst hold them, remaining silent until they have done speaking, in order to listen to their admonitions ; and if thou hast to question them, await their answer in silence. If thou do this with humility, the Lord will teach thee as He taught His disciples on this occasion.

Fourth Point.—Consider those words of Christ, “It is expedient to you that I go ;” in which He shows that He was not going to the Father so much for His own advantage as for ours, seeking in all His actions our good and profit. O Father ! truly a Father Who considers the advantage of His sons before His own. Observe thine own conduct, and see whether in thy actions thou dost look to thy personal interest or to the service of Christ, whether thou dost consider His glory and His honour rather than thine own, whether thou seekest thy convenience and advantage or thy neighbour’s, and learn from thy Master to postpone all thy interests to His service. Beg of Him grace to practise so high a lesson and to follow so illustrious an example, in order that thou mayst deserve to enter in His company into the kingdom of God.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST AND HIS COMING.

First Point.—Christ promises the Holy Ghost to His disciples in order that they may desire His coming and pray for it ; and He tells them that when He shall come He will convince the world of sin, because He comes to uproot the thorns of vice, to purify the world from sin, and to plant the sweet-smelling flowers of virtue. Enter by consideration into thy innermost soul and see the

thorns of vice which have, through thy malice and negligence, sprung up therein. Beg of Christ to send thee His Holy Spirit, and entreat the Holy Ghost Himself to come to purify and cleanse thee from the evil growth of vice, and to convert thy soul into a paradise adorned with the flowers of virtue. Acknowledge thy poverty, and say to Him with humility, "Lord, I of myself have nought but briars and thorns of vice and sins; such alone does my soul engender, such is the growth of my ill-disposed flesh: but let Thy Divine hand come and work this uncultivated soil, and change this vile and thorny ground into a fruitful field of virtues."

Second Point.—Consider which are the sins of which the Holy Spirit will convince the world. The first, Christ tells us, is that of its incredulity and want of faith, because after so many miracles and wonders, and after so much teaching of such holy doctrine, it refused to believe in Him. Place thy hand on thy breast and consider attentively whether He can convince thee of this sin. See how many wonders He has wrought in thee, and how thou yet failest to believe and to give thyself up to His service, and although thou dost confess Him with thy lips, thou deniest Him by thy works, performing them as though thou didst not believe His word, since thou dost not execute it. Weep over thy sins, and beg of God grace to cure thyself of them and to serve Him henceforth with perfection.

Third Point.—Consider the second sin of which the Holy Ghost is to convince the world when He comes, namely, against justice, that is, the justice of Christ and His sanctity, defending His innocence, and showing that He was holy, just, innocent, and unjustly accused and condemned, and that there is no true virtue but that which proceeds from Him; and lastly, bearing witness how He was received and honoured by His Eternal Father in heaven. Of all this He will bear testimony, and convince the world without any one being able to

answer Him ; from which draw two conclusions : first, that it is a work of the Holy Spirit to defend the honour of Christ ; secondly, that the Holy Ghost defends the honour of those who place theirs in His hands, and that He glorifies them before the world. Commit thine honour to His keeping, and He will protect it as He did that of the Redeemer of the world.

Fourth Point.—Finally, He will convince the world of judgment, because it allowed itself to be conquered by the devil, whom Christ vanquished and bound down in the dungeon of hell. Had He not defeated and enchained him it might seem as though men had some sort of cause for yielding to his weapons and falling into the snares of vice ; but Christ having overcome him and holding him enchained, they are inexcusable, and the Holy Ghost will convince them that they fall and are enslaved through their own malice. See if He can convince thee of this sin, and whether by thy negligence thou dost allow thyself to be overcome by so weak an enemy ; remember that Christ conquered him, disarmed him, and took away his power ; and if he assail thee, strengthen thyself against him and yield not ; raise thine eyes to Christ the conqueror, and beg His protection ; He will give it thee, and thine enemies shall lie conquered at thy feet.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE INTERIOR PEACE OF THE SOUL.

First Point.—Consider how Christ, when appearing to His disciples, saluted them with those sweet words, *Pax vobis*, “Peace be to you ;” because peace is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost and a singular favour from God, Who gives it to whom He pleases, and Who bestowed it

on His disciples on the day of His Resurrection. Beg of the Divine Majesty, since it is His gift, that He bestow it on thee, and that He grant thee this favour in virtue of the joy and glory of His Resurrection.

Second Point.—Consider the tranquillity and consolation enjoyed by a soul in the possession of this peace, which is a foreshadowing of heaven, where all enjoy most perfect peace without any feeling of disquiet in their soul, or of strife, or sorrow, and unutterable peace, joy, and delight in the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, consider the weariness, depression, and sadness which those persons endure who are deprived of this interior peace, who are ever uneasy, melancholy, and restless, bereft of all consolation and joy, and in whom hell is, as it were, foreshadowed. For although they may be steeped in exterior pleasures and delights, no drop passes their lips, for their hearts are consumed by that internal strife which wastes their souls with sorrow. Ponder the difference which exists between these two states; see how in the one perfect peace is enjoyed in the midst of the greatest poverty, whilst in the other a cruel warfare is endured in the midst of extreme opulence. In flame thy soul with lively desires of obtaining that peace and escaping this strife; purpose firmly to leave no stone unturned in the endeavour to possess it.

Third Point.—Consider in what this interior peace consists, namely, in peace with God and the possession of so clear a conscience that thy heart reproach thee with no sin nor any action contrary to the Divine Will. Interior strife, on the contrary, is born of an evil conscience and of the enmity which the wicked bear towards God; for which reason Isaias says, "There is no peace to the wicked."¹ Draw hence firm resolutions not to soil thy conscience or fall into sin for anything in the world, and rather to lose all things than to forfeit thy peace with God and the tranquillity of thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider the means whereby this peace

¹ Isaias xvii.

of soul is preserved, which are, as we said above, to live in the grace of God, to detach the heart from all earthly things, and to fix it on heavenly ones. All things here below are changeable, there is nothing permanent, and he that leans on such is moved by every wind and loses his peace; therefore is the heart of the wicked as the ocean, which every wind disturbs, and which rises and falls each day; thus do sinners vary with each change of the world, and they never remain long in the same condition; whilst the good are like the sun, which is ever the same, suffering neither change nor diminution. Place not thy trust in men, nor in the perishable goods of this world, but in God alone, Who changes not, and thou shalt enjoy eternal peace.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON PEACE AND FRATERNAL CHARITY.

First Point.—Consider how Christ before departing for heaven said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you;" not such as the world gives, but permanent and solid peace. For it was His will that we as His children should always be at peace; and thus He says in the Gospel of St. John, "By this shall men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." In like manner St. Austin tells us that fraternal charity is the sign and especial mark of the sheep of the fold of Christ, which distinguishes them from those of Satan. Ponder the importance of this virtue, and consider to which of these folds thou wouldst belong; beg of Christ to mark thee with that sign, and to grant thee grace to be united with thy brethren in love, peace, and solid charity.

Second Point.—Consider the fruits of peace and the

evils of discord, for the loss of peace with our neighbour causes the loss of peace with God, and therewith that of all good things, of joy, of consolation both interior and exterior, for time and for eternity. With peace, on the other hand, all good things are secured, increased, and multiplied, and thus, if only for personal interest, peace with our neighbour should be sought and maintained at any cost. Consider how often and for what slight cause thou hast forfeited this peace, and endeavour to recover and preserve it with all diligence and care, as a precious jewel from the hand of the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the means whereby peace and fraternal charity are obtained and secured, which are: By wishing for thy neighbour that which thou desirest for thyself. By loving him as thyself, and not doing to him what thou wouldst not that he did unto thee. By bearing one another's burdens, as St. Paul tells us, and thus fulfilling the law of Christ: "Thy peace shall be in much patience." See how much others have to endure from thee, and bear thou with them. Break not the bond of charity for the sake of human interests, for divine interests are more important; weigh the one against the other, see how necessary it is to suffer much for the sake of peace, and beg of the Lord patience and love, and He will grant them to thee that thou mayst live at peace with all.

Fourth Point.—Consider the peace which Christ maintained towards all men, loving and doing good to all, even to His personal enemies, and how He purchased it at the cost of infinite patience. Remember that Christ is represented by each one of thy brethren, for He says,¹ "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." Ponder the respect and consideration thou wouldst show to the Lord Himself, and what patience and love thou wouldst manifest towards Him, and endeavour to exercise the like towards thy neighbours, and to be at peace with them, loving them and bearing

¹ Matt. xxv.

with them after the example of thy Redeemer. Ponder how much He suffers from thee, and how much thou shouldst suffer from thy neighbours for His love. Raise thine eyes to heaven; consider the peace which reigns there amongst the blessed, and tenderly beg of God to grant thee grace ever to maintain the like with thy brethren.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON SPIRITUAL JOY AND CONSOLATION.

First Point.—Consider the sadness felt by the apostles in the Cenacle because of the absence of Christ our Lord, and the fear they were in of the Jews, and how at His visitation those clouds of sorrow were dispersed and their hearts were encouraged by the light and joy which the Redeemer communicated to them. Whence thou shouldst draw a lively apprehension of the interior joy of the soul and its source, which is the presence and friendship of God, as David testifies¹ when he says, “My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God;” not, as St. Austin remarks, in the riches and delights of the age, which are the lifeless idols of this world; but in the true and living God, in whom exist and from whom proceed the true joy and interior consolation of the Spirit. Resolve to seek God, to possess God, to unite thyself with God, and to despise the world, and thou wilt find the true joy of the soul.

Second Point.—Consider that joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, Who communicates it, according to His good pleasure, to those who merit it by worthy service. Lay open thy heart, and cry aloud with tears to the Divine Spirit, begging of Him to grant it to thee. Place thy hand on thy breast, and see whether there be in thee

¹ Psalm lxxxiii.

anything that impedes His action, and endeavour to remove all blemishes or thorns of faults and imperfections which oppose the action of the Divine Spirit in thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider that this spiritual joy, which encourages to virtue and produces devotion in the soul, is born of a good conscience, and is the effect of a holy and perfect life, according to the words of David,¹ “Much peace have they that love Thy law,” and to those of St. Paul,² “Glory and honour and peace to every one that worketh good;” and of them that do evil, he adds, “tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil;” in accordance with which St. Bernard says,³ “If thou wouldst not be sad, lead a good life, for a good conscience is ever joyous.” Ponder all that has been said, and resolve to please God in all thy works, and to seek this spiritual joy by a good and holy life.

Fourth Point.—Consider what should be the subject of this spiritual joy, and how, to be perfect, it should be founded not so much on our interest as on the glory and honour of God; and thus we should rejoice and be glad in our hearts because of the greatness of God’s goodness, because of all His perfections and attributes, of His infinite wisdom, power, providence, immensity, liberality, &c. We should exult at His being known, exalted, adored, and served by all His creatures. We should rejoice at all the gifts and graces that God has communicated, and can communicate to men and angels; at those that He bestows on the blessed in heaven, as well as on such as yet combat in this world; at all the things ordered by God according to His good pleasure, and that His will should be done in all things, and be praised and glorified by all on earth as it is in heaven. This is the highest act of charity towards God, to rejoice at His glory because He is Who He is. Study with all diligence to learn it and to practise it frequently, and God will teach thee, and will inundate thy soul with the

¹ Psalm cxviii. 165.

² Rom. ii.

³ Bernard de Int. Dom., c. 45.

joy of the Holy Ghost, and the divine unction of His grace to serve Him with devotion and perfection. But it is not therefore forbidden to rejoice and be glad at the hope of heaven, and because of the favours we receive from the hand of God ; for Christ told His disciples to rejoice that their names were written in the book of life and in the archives of heaven.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PEACE AND SPIRITUAL JOY EXPERIENCED BY OUR
BLESSED LADY.

First Point.—Consider what interior peace the most Blessed Virgin ever enjoyed, how intimately her will was united with that of God, without the least desire contrary to His. She was exalted above all earthly things, as though she lived not in this world, and her heart was so set on eternal ones, that it seemed as though she lived rather in heaven than on earth. Praise the Lord with this Heavenly Queen for the great things that He wrought in her, and beg of her to obtain for thee some degree of that same peace and grace of which she enjoyed so large a measure.

Second Point.—Consider the peace she always preserved with those around her, never breaking or lessening the bond of fraternal charity, but ever bearing with her neighbour with most perfect love, and returning good for evil ; and, as St. Jerome tells us, spreading peace amongst all with most perfect charity. Contemplate the peace of this celestial Virgin, and learn from her example to be an angel of peace to thy brethren.

Third Point.—Consider the interior joy of her soul, enlightened by heavenly communications and instructed by divine inspirations on the essence of God and His in-

finite perfections ; consider the light she had with regard to the worship and reverence rendered to God by all creatures, especially by the angels and perfect men, concerning the mercies which He does them in communicating to them His graces and gifts, and especially with regard to those which the Holy Virgin had herself received from Him, and to which she herself bears witness, saying,¹ “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, . . . because He that is mighty hath done great things in me.” Contemplate that ocean of joy and delight which inundated her soul ; rejoice with her joy, and beg of her to make thee participate in the devotion wherewith she served the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the joy she experienced at the glory of her most Holy Son and at that attained by the saints, and especially by St. Joseph, her most worthy spouse, St. John the Baptist, and others whom she knew and loved so well on earth. Consider the favours that God bestowed on men for her sake, especially on those for whom the Holy Virgin herself interceded, and what thanksgivings she rendered to God for them. Beg of her to remember thee, to speak to God in thy favour, and to obtain for thee grace to despise what is earthly, to appreciate what is heavenly, and to love God most perfectly, seeking in all things His greater honour and glory, as the Blessed Virgin did herself.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the fifth Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVI.)

In this Gospel Christ exhorts His disciples to pray to the Eternal Father, and to pray in His name, assuring them that they shall not ask in vain, &c.

¹ Luke i.

First Point.—Consider the liberality and the mercy of God towards men, Who is so desirous of conferring favours on us that He exhorts and persuades us to solicit them, with the antecedent will to grant us what we ask for. Ponder how men are offended at being besought, and God considers it a sort of offence not to be solicited, and He awaits us with His hands full of gifts to bestow them on us. Blessed be so good a God, so liberal and merciful. Learn thou also to be generous towards thy neighbour, and acquire great confidence in the divine bounty, that thou wilt obtain what thou dost ask for.

Second Point.—Consider that God is very well aware of our needs and knows the desires of our heart; and although His love for us is infinite, He sends not His gifts, but waits that we should pray and ask them of Him, because He has determined to bestow them as the price of prayer. Ponder how many mercies from His liberal Hand are lost to thee because thou dost not pray and beseech Him for them, and how many He has prepared for thee and for His Church, waiting for thee to solicit them. Render many thanks to Him for this, and resolve to pray incessantly, and to beg favours of Him for thyself and for His Church, and not to lose them for lack of prayer.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ tells His disciples that until then they had asked for nothing in His name; which St. Austin says is to be understood of spiritual goods, because to ask for temporal and earthly goods that are not directed to the service of God is to ask for nothing. Wherein thou shouldst perceive what it is that thou shouldst ask of God if thou wouldst obtain the fulfilment of thy petitions, namely, for spiritual things, and for such as are conducive to the service of God; for all the rest are as nought, and are esteemed such in the sight of God, and thou also shouldst despise them.

Fourth Point.—Enter now into account with thyself, and search with the light of grace into the secrets of thy soul; examine leisurely what needs thou hast and what things are lacking to thee. Review the powers of thy

soul, and see how many wants thou hast contracted by sin, by lack of virtue, superabundance of self-love, and unrestrained appetites; and since God lays open to thee the treasures of His grace, and invites thee to solicit Him, be not behindhand in asking whatsoever thou dost need and desire for thy salvation and for His glory.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY—(LUKE II.)

Christ in this Gospel exhorts us to persevere in prayer by the example of a man who solicits a loan from a friend, and although the hour is unseasonable, obtains what he asks, because of his importunity and perseverance; and also by the example of the son who asks his father for necessary food, and because of the love he bears him the father cannot refuse. And our Lord adds, "Still less will God refuse His good Spirit to them that ask it of Him with filial affection."

First Point.—Consider the bounty and mercy of God, who, at all hours and in all times and places, has the door open to prayer, awaiting and hearkening to whomsoever desires to speak to Him or to beseech Him, and giving audience to our petitions in His own person without the intervention of officials or ministers. Rejoice to have such a Lord and so good a God, and give Him thanks for this favour, and for having rendered so easy a matter so important and necessary. Abandon the great ones of the earth and apply to heaven with thy petitions, and thou wilt obtain the accomplishment of thy desires.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ says in the Gospel of that friend who refused at first what was asked of him, and because of the importunity of him who persevered in asking, yielded and gave it to him;

wherein Christ teaches us that sometimes God delays to grant what is asked for and treats us with severity, in order to prove our faith and perseverance, and if these are not wanting, He grants what we ask of Him. Derive hence a firm resolve to persevere in prayer, even though God should use thee harshly, though He deny thee what thou dost solicit and thou seest contrary effects ; because perseverance obtains the favours of the Lord, and if thou givest way before labour and dost lose courage, thou wilt not obtain what thou seekest. Hope in the Lord and do good and thou wilt experience His mercy.

Third Point.—Consider the words of Christ in this Gospel, namely, “Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and you shall find : knock, and it shall be opened to you.” In which He teaches us to ask with the voice, to seek with diligence, and to solicit with our hands ; because prayer is not to be of the lips alone, but accompanied with diligence, with fervour, and good works of penance and mercy, as, according to St. Bonaventure,¹ our Lady taught St. Elizabeth. Take this lesson to thyself, and consider whether thy prayer be so accompanied, or whether thy petitions are made with the lips only, and not with the heart and with fervour and good works. See how much thou dost lose by thy tepidity, and beg of God His grace to become more fervent, and to associate thy prayers with fasting, mortification, and good works.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that no son asking his father for bread would receive from him instead a stone, or a serpent, or a scorpion, but only what is good and suitable for his welfare, and that “much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him.” Wherein thou shouldst ponder two things : first, the love that God bears us as a Father, and how He desires that we should pray to Him with the affection of children ; secondly, that as a father never gives his child what he knows to be injurious to him, but always that which is good and profitable, so,

¹ S. Bonaven. Medit. 3 de Vita Christi.

in like manner, God gives not to His children the things they ask for when these are not conducive to their welfare, but only those that are useful and profitable to them, and His good and Holy Spirit to direct them on the road to heaven. Whence thou shouldst derive great confidence in the love that God bears towards thee, and a humble indifference in what thou dost solicit, leaving it entirely in His hands, beseeching Him to amend thy petitions, and to give thee whatever may be for His greater glory, accepting with equal serenity and gratitude the rejection or acceptance of thy petition, adverse as well as prosperous things, sickness as well as health, fully persuaded that they are gifts from the hand of the Lord. And, as St. Bernard says, desist not from thy prayer, because God will grant thee what thou askest, or He will give thee something better in its place, as was the case with St. Paul, who did not obtain from God to be delivered from the temptation of the flesh which he suffered although he solicited it with instance, but the Lord gave him something better instead, which was the grace to conquer the temptation and to merit thereby a reward.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON PRAYER—(JOHN XVI.)

First Point.—Consider the power and efficacy of prayer with God, since Christ has given us His word that the Eternal Father will grant us whatsoever we ask therein. Prayer appeases the wrath of God and opens heaven; it inclines His will, and obtains spiritual and temporal goods, tears and contrition for sin, the grace and friendship of God, and the inheritance of heaven and whatsoever we can desire. Wherefore the Redeemer tells us to pray and solicit, that our joy may be perfect; for

prayer fills the soul with joy, and through it we obtain the fulfilment of our desires. Oh, celestial virtue! oh, grace that obtains grace and the inheritance of glory! oh, key that openest the gate of heaven and the treasury of God! Grant me, Lord, this grace wherewith to obtain all graces, and a firm resolution never to fail in prayer for the sake of any earthly interest, but rather to persevere therein all my life, so as to continue therein in the next throughout eternity. Amen.

Second Point.—Ponder those words of the Saviour: "Amen, amen. I say to you, If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you." Consider the value of the name of Christ, and how powerful and weighty it is with God, on account of the great merits of His Blood. Beg of God by these merits and in His name all that thou needest, for His merits are infinite, and however much thou dost ask for, His merits are greater still.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ tells us to pray; because He will pray to the Father in union with us, and His prayer will accompany ours, assisting and furthering our petitions to God. Having such a Patron and Advocate, be very firmly confident that thou wilt obtain what thou dost ask. Entreat Him always to accompany thee when thou interest on prayer, and beg Him to keep His word by praying with thee and for thee to the Father. Beseech Him to offer thy prayers, and to supply with His merits what is lacking to thine, and have confidence in His bounty, that if thou dost this with fervour, thou wilt experience His aid and thy prayer will be effectual.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ tells us that the man who sought his friend at midnight obtained what he asked for. St. Peter Chrysologus assures us that this was because there is no better time for negotiating with God; first, on account of the silence and quiet of that hour, then because of the secret and obscurity of the night, and again on account of the mortification of breaking sleep and abandoning the repose of the body, which men commonly

take at that season, in order to devote it to prayer and communication with God, Who is well pleased with those who praise and bless Him at a time when others forget Him in the sleep of night. Derive hence a resolution to pray at that hour, and to exert thyself in serving and loving God when others forget Him, and of breaking thy sleep and the repose of the body in order to seek that of the soul, which is to be found in prayer and commune with God.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday—Vigil of the Ascension.

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVII.)

The Gospel tells us how Christ, being with His disciples on the night of His Passion, and about to pass out of this world to His Father, lifted up His eyes to heaven and besought Him to glorify His Son, as the hour was come for Him to be glorified, for He had finished the work given Him to do, &c.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, Christ might have prayed to His Father on this occasion interiorly in His soul, and He chose rather to pray exteriorly, at the same time raising His eyes and voice to heaven, in order to teach His disciples, and through them all men, how to pray to God with both soul and body, and to ask favours of Him, acknowledging that all good things come to us from His hand. Whence do thou learn to have constant recourse to God in all things, praying and entreating the Divine Majesty, from whom all good proceeds, and, after the example of Christ our Lord, praying not with the soul only, but likewise with the body, with extreme reverence and devotion.

Second Point.—Meditate the words with which Christ commences His prayer: "Father, the hour is come."

Ponder how there is no hour that does not come at length, nor term that is not reached. Christ came into the world, pursued His course, and soon reached the end; thine hour will likewise come, the end of thy life, the term of thy labours, and the time of receiving their reward, and it will come sooner than thou thinkest. Consider and note what thou wilt then feel, examine how thou hast spent thy days, and how thou wilt then wish to have spent them. Christ spent His in glorifying His Father, and thou perchance dost spend thine in offending Him. Weep over thy sins, and beg of God grace to employ thyself wholly in His service and in heaping up immortal riches, in order to have some security in that critical moment.

Third Point.—Consider that Christ did not ask to be glorified so much for Himself as in order to glorify the Father. Wherein He teaches us to seek in all things, even in striving for beatitude, rather the glory of God and His honour than our own. Aspire to this perfection in imitation of Christ; direct all thy actions to the honour and glory of God, begging and praying that He may be praised in all things.

Fourth Point.—Consider the claim that Christ asserts when asking His Father to glorify Him, namely, that He has finished the work He had given Him to do, which was to glorify Him on earth by manifesting His name to the world, and drawing men to His knowledge and service. Whence thou shouldst draw, first, that if thou wouldst attain to heavenly glory, thou must accomplish to the end the work that God has committed to thee. Weary not and faint not on the way, for to them that persevere is the crown promised. Suffer with Christ and for Christ if thou wouldst reign with Christ. Secondly, that God glorifies in heaven those who honour Him on earth; and thirdly, that God is honoured and glorified by the conversion of sinners; wherefore thou shouldst be encouraged to seek the profit of thy brethren, and to draw them to the knowledge of

God, glorifying Him in them, if thou wouldst be glorified by His Divine Majesty in heaven.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

For Ascension Day.

ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST OUR LORD INTO HEAVEN.

First Point.—Consider that as the stone is attracted to its centre, so in like manner did Christ ever long to ascend to His Father, and He only remained on earth in order to glorify Him, and to convert men and draw them to His service. At last the time came when His desires, increased by delay, having reached their utmost intensity, He ascended into heaven to enjoy the glory He had merited. Whence thou shouldst learn to postpone thy convenience and to limit thy consolations, even spiritual ones, when needful, for the service of God and for the good of thy neighbour, and to trust in the bounty of the Most High, that since He has given thee the desire, He will likewise fulfil it when it shall be for His service and for thy good, as He fulfilled that of Christ. Excite thyself with His example to love God and to desire His glory. Fix thy whole mind on eternal things, confiding in the Divine Pity that thy desires will shortly be accomplished.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ appeared to His apostles and all His disciples, and commanded them to go to Mount Olivet, which, as St. Bonaventure says, is a mile distant from Jerusalem. There He appeared to them again, and took leave of them with most tender words, beginning with His most Holy Mother, whom He tenderly embraced, and then taking leave of the disciples and of the holy women who had accompanied and served Him in the course of His life, all of whom, as the seraphic doctor says, prostrated themselves at His feet and

kissed His wounds with intense reverence and tenderness, shedding many tears of pure devotion. Whilst they were yet prostrate, Christ raised His hands, and, as the Evangelist St. Luke says, gave them His blessing after the manner of a Father about to leave this world. Be present in spirit at this scene, and enter by meditation into the heart of the Saviour. Contemplate the struggle that took place therein between His love for His Father and that towards His disciples ; the latter retaining Him on earth, the former urging Him to heaven. Ponder how at last He found means to remain and to depart ; remaining with them in the Blessed Sacrament and going to His Father to prepare heaven for them, according to what St. Gregory tells us, viz., that in that hour He eat with them and communicated them as at the Last Supper, in order to show them that He remained in their society. Observe likewise the love that the disciples manifested towards their Master, and the tenderness and grief that filled their hearts ; how they longed to accompany Him, and how Christ consoled them, promising them the Holy Spirit in a few days thence. Raise thy heart to the Lord, and entreat Him not to leave thee orphan, but to give thee His blessing as His disciple. Bewail, lament, pray, entreat, and beseech thy Father to console thee His son at His departure.

Third Point.—Consider how then were heard on that mountain the choirs of angels singing sweetly, and a celestial fragrance pervaded the air, whilst Christ with all that blessed company of the holy patriarchs slowly and triumphantly ascended, more resplendent than the sun, illuminating the heavens and the earth, in the sight of the most Blessed Virgin and of all the Church there assembled, whose hearts were bathed in joy at beholding their most glorious Redeemer ascend in triumph to heaven, and, enflamed with longing desires to accompany Him on the road, they united their praises with the canticles of the angels, their rejoicings with those of the glorious saints who accompanied Him. And whilst

participating in the bliss of this vision, they felt themselves urged to labour in the service of God and for the increase of His Church, by beholding the reward that He has prepared for them that serve Him faithfully. Come, O my soul, to this mountain, be present at this triumph, and rejoice at the glory of thy Saviour; give Him a thousand praises with His disciples; unite thy voice to theirs, and thy petitions to their supplications. Contemplate the reward that God bestows on those who serve Him worthily, and excite thyself to serve Him in order to merit a share in this triumph.

Fourth Point.—Consider how a cloud received the Redeemer when He ascended to heaven, removing Him from the sight of His disciples, and two angels clothed in white came and told them how that Lord Who had thus ascended to heaven would come again with like majesty to judge the world; in which thou hast much to learn. First, that God is not well pleased that we should give ourselves unreservedly to the contemplation of Him, but always within the limits of prudence and of a well-regulated mind; secondly, that the Lord desires that even in the midst of the greatest feasts and rejoicings we should not be forgetful of His judgments or of the rigour of His justice, but that they should be ever present to our minds, in order that whilst His mercy and the remembrance of His rewards stimulate our love, the recollection of His justice and chastisements should awaken that fear which shall restrain us from vice. Observe that the angels say not when He will come, because no day is safe, nor does He will us to have any security. Compare the life of Christ with His coming, and see what it becomes thee to do now for thy good and thy salvation, in view of His coming to judge thee hereafter as a just and avenging Judge.

*FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Friday.*

ON THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO HEAVEN.

First Point.—Contemplate all the celestial court coming forth clothed in robes of glory to receive Christ with hymns and heavenly canticles, singing to Him that which St. John¹ tells us in his Apocalypse he had heard them sing: “The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction.” And then all taking the crowns from their heads, would cast them at His feet, as St. John saw the ancients do. And if here on earth there is no one who does not share in the common joy on like occasions, how much more must not all the heavenly courtiers have participated in the joy of that day, all of whom from their thrones of glory revered the Redeemer, and received fresh increase of glory from His glory, and offered Him their praises and congratulations at beholding the restoration of the empty thrones in their midst, and men ascending to people the heavenly court. Contemplate all that occurred, and rejoice at the glory of thy Redeemer, congratulating Him in union with the whole heavenly city.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ our Lord, kneeling down before the Eternal Father, presented to Him that army of souls which He brought with Him as the spoils of His victory, and gave Him infinite thanks for the graces and favours He had bestowed on Him, and the Eternal Father crowned Him with the laurels of a conqueror and seated him on his right hand, making Him Judge of the living and the dead, and universal Advocate of all the human race. And then all the courtiers of heaven approached to acknowledge and

¹ Apoc. v. 12.

worship Him as their King and Lord. Approach thou also with them ; rejoice to have such a Prince, such a Lord, and such a Mediator with the Most High. Rejoice to see thy Brother in the flesh so powerful with God, and derive thence great confidence of obtaining what thou dost solicit from the Lord by means of His intercession.

Third Point.—Consider how He at once began to exercise His office, and to distribute the thrones of heaven amongst those whom He had brought with Him, giving to each one a place according to his merits. Behold that which He bestowed on St. Joseph, placing him near to Himself, amongst the seraphim of heaven, and that which He conferred on St. John the Baptist and the holy prophets, especially on Abraham and Moses, &c. Ponder the joy of these saints at finding themselves freed from the captivity in which they had lingered, which joy was increased by the comparison of the lowliness of limbo with the glory of heaven ; what thanksgivings they offered to Christ for the mercy they had received at His hand ; how they forgot their past labours, and considered them well spent in procuring the delight of their present glory. Ruminates on this sweet doctrine, and draw thence great profit of devotion, strength, confidence, and energy to endure many labours here for God, in order to merit to reign eternally with Him.

Fourth Point.—Above all, lay stress on the consideration of the glory that Christ received and enjoys in His soul as well as in His body, and on the throne on which He is seated amidst the seraphim and angelic spirits, whose throne in this world was a cross between thieves and malefactors. Compare the one with the other ; contemplate the difference that exists between the two ; how the cross is exchanged for glory ; how short a time the one lasts, and how eternal is the other, and derive thence courage to bear thy cross with Christ, in order to deserve to reign hereafter with Him. See how He at once fulfils His office of Advocate for mankind, by beseeching the

Eternal Father not to leave us orphans, but to send the Holy Spirit the Comforter, and by imploring the Holy Spirit Himself to deign to descend to console and strengthen men. Oh, immense charity of the Redeemer! Who, not content with giving His blood and life for me, in the midst of His highest glory interests Himself about my needs and is solicitous for my welfare. A thousand thanks I render Thee, O Lord, for so signal a mercy, and I entreat Thee that as Thou takest on Thyself the office of my Advocate, Thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of my sins, and a spark of the fire of the Holy Ghost which may purify my soul and render me worthy to serve Thee eternally. Amen.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE SINGULAR JOY EXPERIENCED BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN AT THE TRIUMPH AND GLORIFICATION OF HER MOST HOLY SON.

First Point.—Consider that although all the disciples experienced great joy at the ascension and triumph of Christ our Lord, yet was that of the most Blessed Virgin greater than any beyond all comparison, first, because as His Mother, she loved Him more than all and was loved by Him; secondly, because she apprehended more clearly the greatness of His glory; and, thirdly, because in proportion as her grief at His Passion was greater, so also was her joy at His glorification more intense. For all these reasons was the glory of the Mother increased above that of the rest by the glory of her Son. Penetrate by contemplation into her innermost soul, and behold it bathed with ineffable delight and intense joy at His felicity, and rejoice with her in her joy, and thank God most lovingly for it.

Second Point.—Consider the joy which our Lady experienced on this day at beholding the glory of the saints, and especially that of her most holy spouse St. Joseph, of St. John the Baptist, and of the holy Fathers with whom she had associated in this world. Ponder how she would congratulate them on their felicity, and they her on the glory of her most Holy Son, saluting each other with reciprocal love. Behold how steadfast in her heart was the hope of promptly reaching the glory she witnessed in the saints, conformably with the testimony of her conscience, and the promise thereof which she had received from her Son. With all these causes for joy her delight and desires were greatly increased, although she conformed herself fully and in all things with the will of the Most High. Whence thou shouldst derive affections of joy and congratulation at her glory, and at that of thy brethren and of all the saints, and of hope of attaining through the merits of Christ to the same glory that they reached.

Third Point.—Consider how, by a singular privilege, the Queen of Heaven was present in spirit at the triumph of her Son in heaven, and at His coronation by the hand of the Eternal Father; how she beheld the throne on which He was placed, and the prerogatives and offices that were conferred upon Him. And if here below a mother is intimately rejoiced by the advancement of her son, and the mother of Nero so desired to see him emperor that she offered her life to secure him the crown, what must not have been the contentment experienced by the Blessed Virgin at seeing her most Holy Son Emperor of heaven and earth, crowned in glory on so exalted a throne, and constituted supreme Judge of all the human race? O most Holy Virgin! all this and much more has thy most precious Son merited. I offer thee a thousand congratulations for His glory, and I am more rejoiced at it than if it were my own. Soon wilt thou find thyself at His side crowned with thy merits; meanwhile pray for this unworthy servant of thine, and

obtain for me grace to direct my steps in the path of His holy service.

Fourth Point.—Consider the frequent visits that Christ must have paid His Holy Mother during those days, what sweet intercourse they had with each other, what heavenly illuminations and favours she received from God ; and rejoicing thereat, beseech her for grace to merit to receive worthily the visits of the Lord. Entreat her not to forget thee, and to intercede with her most precious Son for the necessities of the Church, and for thy needs in particular. For if on occasion of the triumphs of earthly kings favours are conferred on all, how much greater will not be those bestowed on occasion of the triumph of the Eternal King and Emperor of heaven. Be not slow to ask and God will not be slow to give.



FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the sixth Sunday after Easter.

(Within the Octave of Ascension.)

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XV.)

Christ tells His disciples in this Gospel how, when the Paraclete, Whom the Father will send, shall come, He will give testimony of Christ, and they also are to give testimony of Him by the many labours and persecutions they will undergo for His love, of which He warns them, that they may not be taken unawares, but may remember that He had foretold it to them.

First Point.—Consider the certainty with which Christ speaks of the coming of the Holy Ghost, which He had promised His disciples, knowing that He would come very shortly and would give testimony of Him, in order that thou shouldst know that the word of God is not false and deceitful like that of men, but that His promises

are infallible and certain, and will all be punctually fulfilled. Whence thou shouldst derive great faith in His word, and most steadfast confidence in His promises, knowing that they will all be faithfully accomplished. If he delays, be not distrustful, but excite thy hope; for without doubt He will come and keep His word and fulfil thy desires.

Second Point.—Consider that He does not say that He will Himself alone send the Holy Ghost, but that He will be sent from the Father, in order not to attribute the glory of this action to Himself alone, but rather to the Eternal Father, in order that they might give Him thanks for it, acknowledging this benefit to come from the hands of both. Place thy hand on thy breast and see how different is thy conduct, attributing to thyself not alone the works of thy hands, but oftentimes the works of others, and causing the glory thereof to be given to thee. Consider how in truth of thyself thou hast neither power nor strength to do a single good work, but that all proceed from the grace of God; and since this is so, humble thyself in His presence, learn the humility of Christ, and attribute nothing good to thyself, but to the grace of the Lord, to Whom the honour and glory of all are due.

Third Point.—Christ says that the Holy Ghost will give testimony of Him, and that the apostles will give witness likewise, in order, as St. Austin says, that we should know that the witness of the Holy Ghost and of the apostles is one and the same without any difference, because the Holy Ghost speaks by their mouth. O Lord! would that I were fully convinced of this truth, that the words addressed to me by Thy ministers, who are successors of the apostles, are the words of the Holy Ghost; that it is He who exhorts, admonishes, counsels, and reproves me by their mouth. Would that I hearkened to them and accepted them as such! Grant me this grace that I may hearken to all superiors, preachers, confessors, and elders as to Thy ministers, and as to the

voice of the Holy Ghost, so as to perform and execute as His commands what they enjoin and advise.

Fourth Point.—Consider the manner in which Christ tells His disciples that they will have to bear witness to Him, which is to be not by words alone, but much more by deeds, enduring many and great trials for His love with invincible patience. This is the touchstone which reveals the true and faithful follower of the Lord, and whereby the power of the Crucified is made known to men, and shines forth in His chosen ones by grace. For this purpose He exposes them to the blows of adversity in order that the purity of the fire of charity which is enclosed within their breasts may be made manifest, and that all may recognise in their patience and constancy that of their Master and Captain, and may believe in Him and become disciples in His school. Place thy hand on thy breast and examine whether thy life bears witness to Christ, and whether infidels can recognise thereby His sanctity and believe in Him. See how He has sent thee to give testimony of Him, and to preach by thy works His patience and humility, His constancy and charity, and all His other virtues. See whether thou dost edify or scandalise the world by thy deeds, and remember that account will be required from thee of thy witness. O Lord! how blind and mistaken have I lived till now! I acknowledge that I have been deceived, and that I have not fulfilled my duty. I beseech Thee to pardon the past, and to give me one spark of the fire of thy Spirit, in order that henceforth I may so live as to give testimony of Thee to the world.

*FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE PERSECUTIONS THAT GOD SENDS TO HIS ELECT.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom says, Christ prophesied to His own the persecutions that they would have to suffer, because He knew and was aware of them, and He could have prevented and spared them, for it was in His power so to do, but He did not do so because it so behoved for their good. Whence thou shouldst learn that no sort of trial whatsoever assails thee without the knowledge of God, Who could prevent it and spare thee, and that He does not do so out of regard for thy good, and because it is suitable to His glory and to the profit of thy soul. Therefore thou shouldst accept everything as coming from His hand, and give Him many thanks for all, and bear all patiently and joyfully for His love. Meditate and penetrate into the depths of this truth, and offer thyself to the Lord in order to suffer and endure whatsoever it may be His will to send thee, and thou wilt find great comfort in thy trials, and strength wherewith to support them.

Second Point.—Consider with St. Austin what Christ says to His disciples: "They will put you out of the synagogues;" whence, as the saint says, they themselves were to fly, as from schools condemned by Christ and calculated to lead them to perdition. Wherein thou wilt perceive the effect of persecutions on the good, namely, to withdraw them from occasions of evil and to purify them from all dross, as gold and silver are purified by fire, and for this reason does God send them. Ponder how many have been crowned with glory through persecutions who would not have been so without them, and how many have been condemned through want of them, and because they lived amidst honours, riches, and abundance. The earth is ploughed with iron and the just are

fashioned by persecution ; remember this, and offer thyself with manly courage to the Lord to suffer for Him such persecutions and trials as may please Him, recognising them to be for the purification of thy soul and to preserve it from all corruption.

Third Point.—Consider, as the same St. Chrysostom says, that Christ warned His apostles that they would be persecuted for His sake and through ignorance, because He would not be acknowledged, in order that, convinced that they were suffering for Him and for the exaltation of His name, they might find joy and consolation in their tribulations, remembering that they were suffering for their Master's sake, Who made them worthy to endure something for Him in return for what He Himself had endured for them. Oh, that thou wouldst meditate on this with devotion and attention, and that thou couldst comprehend how glorious it is to suffer for Christ and for the exaltation of His name ! Raise thy heart to God, and entreat this grace of Him that thou mayst be worthy to suffer something for His love. Remember how persistently God succours and strengthens those that suffer for Him, and what a crown awaits them, and then thou wilt solicit earnestly and from thy heart this grace from His Divine Majesty.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

HOW GOD ARMS HIS ELECT FOR TRIALS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ warns His disciples so long before of the persecutions that they will have to suffer for Him, in order that they may prepare themselves by prayer, meditation, fasting, and penance, and may not be taken unprepared, and be scandalised and fall into impatience and sin. Learn this lesson, and take

the words of Christ as addressed to thee, since thou art His disciple, and prepare thyself forthwith for tribulations by the meditation of what He endured for thee, and of the patience He manifested in all persecutions and trials. Arm thyself with these considerations, as St. Peter advises, in order that thou mayst not fall under temptation.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Gregory says, Christ warns them before the trials come, because they cause less sorrow when foreseen and expected. When a dart is cast at us unawares and unseen it is hard to avoid, but if we see it coming, and know that it is to be directed against us, we may resist it. Ponder deliberately before God how many arrows threaten thee, whether as regards this life or the next, whether they attack thy body or thy soul, coming now from men and now from the devils. Lay stress on the consideration of the next life, on the accusations that will then be brought against thee before the tribunal of Christ, on eternal torments, and on the danger of falling into them. Remember that the Saviour has warned thee of them all, and prepare thyself for the future. See how thou shouldst arm and protect thyself against so many enemies that surround thee, and that those of the body are fewer and weaker, whilst those of the soul are the most numerous and the most terrible. Prostrate thyself before God ; implore His assistance and grace to prepare thyself forthwith as He advises in His Gospel, for thou knowest not at what hour He will come.

Third Point.—Consider and meditate those words of Christ, “The hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth service to God.” Ponder how He calls all their tribulations, which were so numerous, “an hour” because of their brevity, for all is soon over, and for one hour of suffering here, He will give an eternity of enjoyment hereafter in bliss. Oh, happy hour and well spent in which the servants of the Lord achieve so great a gain ! Raise thine eyes to heaven and contemplate the glory of the martyrs and the saints. Behold the rewards

they enjoy, and will enjoy eternally, for one hour of suffering in this life, and take courage from their example to suffer for Christ in order to enjoy Him eternally in heaven.

Fourth Point.—Consider the ignorance of men, of which Christ tells us, who mistake evil for good, and offences against God for defects in Him, and persecute Him, thinking to serve Him, because they are blind and know not the Lord nor His Son Christ Jesus. Cast thine eyes over the world, and see how many there are that are blind, and how few who really know God ; weep over their blindness, and beg of God to give them light to know Him, to issue forth from the darkness in which they live, to cease to persecute those that serve Him, and henceforth rather to assist and favour them, in order that God may be glorified in all.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE LAST APPARITION OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES ON
THE DAY OF HIS GLORIOUS ASCENSION—(MARK XVI.)

First Point.—Consider how the apostles being unprepared, and whilst they were lying down to rest and eat, Christ appeared to them and placed Himself in their midst, like a vigilant shepherd watching over his flock. Whence thou shouldst draw two lessons: First, of the care thou shouldst bestow on those committed to thee by God, sparing no anxiety or labour for the welfare of those under thy charge, ever bearing in mind the account thou wilt have to give of them to God. Secondly, to be thyself ever on the watch, for thou knowest not at what hour the Lord will come, for, as He Himself says,¹ He

¹ Luke xii.

will come at the hour we think not, and when least expected, as a thief does, and that therefore we should be always ready, on the watch, and awaiting His coming, lest He find us unprepared and we be deprived of His grace.

Second Point.—Consider how sternly Christ reproved His disciples because they were so slow to believe and to be convinced of His Resurrection, because God reproves and chastises those whom He loves, fashioning them for heaven with the hammer and the fire of reproof. If thou be a superior, learn courageously to admonish thy subjects of their faults, in order that they may progress towards heaven, and not to leave them in their errors through the cowardice of not enlightening and purifying them. If thou be a subject, ponder the patience with which the disciples bore the reproof of their Master, and see what should be thine when reproved by thy superiors for the welfare of thy soul. See what dross of many faults attaches to thee, how displeasing to God they render thee, and how important it is to purify thy soul ; implore the Lord to cleanse thee by means of reproof, and when it is administered to thee, accept it with gratitude, as a gift from the hand of the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, having reprimanded His disciples, closed the subject, and forthwith made them preachers of His Gospel to the world, commanding them to go and carry His doctrine to the furthest ends thereof. Wherein He teaches us, as good shepherds, to feed as well as to correct, to use gentleness as well as severity, to reward as well as to punish. Learn this lesson, and implore prudence of the Lord in order to know how to govern, and to use both these means towards others, restraining the over-daring with the rigour of the curb, and encouraging the timid with assistance and rewards.

Fourth Point.—Take to thyself those words of Christ, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature." Consider the ardent desire which consumed Christ for the salvation of the world, and spare

no labour for the welfare of thy neighbour. Travel through the world soliciting the conversion of all, and if thou canst not do this in the body, do it in spirit, imploring God with tears to send labourers of great sanctity to convert sinners, and to bestow His Spirit on those who are engaged in His vineyard, in order that they may fulfil His precept and draw the whole world to the knowledge of Him.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday—Octave of the Ascension.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE DAY.

First Point.—Consider the joy that the apostles experienced when Christ appeared to them coming to bid them farewell, which was proportionate with the desire they had of seeing and communicating with Him. Entreat the Lord not to depart without visiting thee and consoling thee, as He did His holy disciples; implore Him not to regard thy sins, but to comfort and strengthen thee, and to give thee His holy benediction.

Second Point.—Consider how He appeared to them whilst at table; because God fixes no time for His consolations, and often bestows them when not at prayer, in answer to petitions made during prayer, in order that His elect may not be vainglorious, conceiving that by their efforts they have elicited the waters of consolation. Weep, lament, and entreat the Lord, confiding in Him Who is ever faithful to His own, and when thou dost least expect it thou wilt experience the fruit of thy prayer, and He will visit and console thee when not engaged in prayer, as He did His holy disciples.

Third Point.—Consider that, as St. Gregory observes, Christ sat down to eat with His disciples, and that He consecrated bread and distributed it to them, and eat

thereof Himself, and then ascended into heaven, in order that we should recognise the power of this Divine Food, which, if we receive it worthily, raises up the soul with Christ to heaven. O Lord, grant me once to prepare myself to receive Thee as I ought; prepare me Thyself to receive Thee, and let this holy fire enflame and elevate my soul so that I may love Thee, desire Thee, and serve Thee eternally as I ought.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate how Christ conducted His disciples to the mountain of Olives, which is symbolical of peace, because peace is one of the means of ascending to heaven. Behold how He took leave of them with tender words and affectionate embraces, and how He gave them His blessing. Ponder the sentiments of their hearts, how they all longed to go with Him, and how He ascended gradually, detained by the love of those whom He was leaving behind in the world. Behold how a cloud gathered around Him and hid Him from His disciples, whose hearts could not fail to be grieved at losing sight of Him, even though it was through no fault of theirs. See that thou lose not sight of Him through thy fault; consider what a cloud of sins thou hast interposed between God and thy soul, and that thereby thou dost lose His vision and His favours. Entreat grace of the Lord to amend, and that thy sins may not occasion thy banishment from His kingdom and the eternal loss of the vision of God.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

HOW THE DISCIPLES RETURNED TO JERUSALEM AFTER
THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD.

First Point.—Consider how two angels appeared to the disciples and commanded them to return to Jerusalem, and they obeyed, and, as St. Luke says, withdrew into

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the Cenacle. It is fitting that thou shouldst enter there with them to contemplate what they do, and observe in what they occupy themselves, thus to learn how to obey God, and how to dispose thyself for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Contemplate first how, filled with that heavenly wine of the love of Christ, they were unable to efface from their memories the vision of His Ascension, nor from their hearts the desire of following Him, continually meditating on His triumph and glory, and longing to see themselves reunited to Him. Associate thyself with them in this longing, and ascend now in spirit to heaven, raising thy heart above all that is earthly, in order that, when the time comes, thou mayst be able to follow Christ likewise in the flesh.

Second Point.—Meditate what St. Austin¹ teaches, namely, that we can make of our vices a ladder whereby to ascend to Christ, trampling on them, and thus raising ourselves by their means. For, as they detain and abase us when we submit ourselves to them, in like manner they exalt us when we subject them and trample them under foot; despising honours, avarice, and sensual delights, and being thus superior to them, we elevate ourselves towards heaven by as many degrees as are the vices that we trample on. Oh, that thou didst know how to make of thy sins a ladder whereby to ascend with Christ to heaven! Embrace not vices which drag thee down to hell, but despise and trample on them and they will raise thee to heaven. Pride ascends not with Christ, neither does avarice, nor revenge, nor sensuality, nor any other vice, but only humility, patience, charity, meekness, long-suffering, and the other virtues. Implore grace of the Lord, through His glorious Ascension, to know how to fashion this ladder, trampling upon vice and cherishing virtue.

Third Point.—Consider the visits that Christ paid during these days to His apostles, consoling and encourag-

¹ August., Serm. 176, de Ascens.

ing them, and reanimating their hope with the promise of the Holy Ghost. Behold how each one of them offered himself to go throughout the world to preach the Gospel, and to give his life joyfully for the love of Christ, in fulfilment of His command to them on the day of His departure for heaven. Enter amongst them, and offer thyself with them to the Lord to do the like, and to lay down thy life in His service.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the intercourse they had with the Holy Virgin Mary, our Lady, and how she communicated to them her revelations concerning heaven. Hear her tell them of the triumph with which the Saviour had entered the celestial court, of His coronation, His throne, His offices, and of the pre-eminence accorded to Him by the Eternal Father, as Judge and Advocate of the whole human race. Ponder what joy they experienced in listening to her, what thanks they offered to God for all these things, and what congratulations to Christ and His Holy Mother, and what an increase of devotion they experienced in return. Oh, holy society! oh, celestial intercourse! oh, holy souls who merited such consolations! Grant me, O Lord, grace to meditate Thy mysteries, to contemplate Thy glories, to deserve to rejoice with Thy disciples therein, and to persevere with them in Thy holy service.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday—Vigil of Pentecost.

HOW THE DISCIPLES PREPARED THEMSELVES FOR THE
COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

First Point.—Consider what St. Luke says,¹ namely, that as soon as Christ ascended into heaven the disciples withdrew to Jerusalem, where they abode during the ten

¹ Acts i.

days that Christ delayed to send them the Holy Ghost, "persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." Wherein thou hast matter for the points of this meditation, considering the means employed by the apostles to hasten His coming. Consider, first, for what motive Christ did not confer the Holy Ghost on His disciples before His departure for heaven, but so many days afterwards, which was, as St. Basil teaches us, in order that they might desire Him, implore His coming, and esteem Him more when He should come. For like reasons does God delay to grant thee the favours thou solicitest of Him, in order to try thy hope; and therefore thou shouldst learn from these saints to persevere in the good desires that God gives thee, and to trust in the Lord, that, as He has been pleased to impart them to thee, He will likewise fulfil them.

Second Point.—Consider how they persevered in one mind, with perfect conformity, peace, and concord, without any disagreements or bitterness arising amongst them, united and bound together with the bonds of fraternal charity, that virtue so agreeable to God and to the Holy Ghost, Who comes not on the dissident, but on those who live in peace and concord and are united in charity. As the soul animates the limbs that are united to and form part of the body, in like manner is it with the Holy Ghost, Who is the spirit of love and the bond of charity between the Father and the Son, and as it were the soul of the Church, which abides not in those members who dissent from her, but in those who are united with her by the close bond of fraternal charity. Therefore entreat God to give thee this virtue and grace to live in peace and concord with thy brethren, and resolve in His presence not to sever this union for any earthly interest whatsoever, in order to deserve to receive the Holy Ghost in thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider how they persevered in prayer, imploring all together and each in particular, with tears

and lamentations, of the Father and of the Son to send them the Holy Ghost, and of the Blessed Spirit Himself to come to console, to fortify, and to strengthen them with His grace. And this they did notwithstanding that Christ had given them His word that He would send Him, because they knew that grace only comes from heaven through prayer, though they did not doubt the fulfilment of His promise; but as there was no time fixed for it, they cried out to the Lord, entreating Him to shorten the delay, and to send them this sublime gift, and they implored the Holy Ghost Himself to come. If, therefore, the apostles purchased with their prayers the gift that was already promised to them, how much greater need hast not thou of praying to God to obtain the graces that thou seekest at His hands. If, therefore, thou wouldst obtain mercy from God, resolve firmly to persevere in prayer. Ponder the recollection in which they spent those ten days, setting aside all secular concerns, which is an important condition for praying well, and endeavour to recollect thyself and to imitate them, if thou wouldst receive the Holy Ghost as they did.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, how St. Luke says that they were in the company of the holy women, followers of the Lord, who prayed with them and with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God; in which thou hast two points of instruction. First, the great chastity of the disciples of the Lord, since, living thus shut up with the women, there was not so much as an evil thought amongst them, but all their thoughts were of heaven and of receiving the Holy Ghost, who, as St. Basil says, comes into the souls of the chaste and pure, and flies from the licentious and immodest, as the dove which symbolises Him flies from unclean and vile places, and comes as if allured to those that are pure and sweet-scented. Wherefore, if thou desirest that He should come into thy soul, cleanse and purify it from all evil odour of this vice and from the corruption of inordinate appetites. The second lesson is to associate thyself with the Blessed

Virgin Mary, as the disciples of Christ did, through whose intercession they obtained the accomplishment of their petition. The Holy Virgin is so powerful, she obtains whatever she solicits from God ; dedicate thyself therefore to her service, seek her patronage, secure her protection, and thou wilt obtain this grace and whatsoever thou seekest from God.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

For Whit-Sunday.

ON THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—The first thing that St. Bonaventure meditates in this sublime gift is that Christ our Lord in heaven, moved by His love as well as by the lamentations and prayers of His disciples, and especially by those of His Holy Mother, prayed and besought the Eternal Father to send down the Holy Ghost, and entreated the Holy Spirit Himself to descend upon them. Wherefore, yielding to His supplications, the Holy Ghost came down and consoled and strengthened them with His might. Meditate thou in like manner ; rejoice to have such an intercessor in heaven ; implore Him affectionately to pray for thee, and to obtain the Holy Ghost for thee as He did for His disciples.

Second Point.—Consider what St. Luke relates, viz., that suddenly there was heard a sound as of a mighty wind from heaven ; and he adds, that it came “suddenly,” not because it found them unprepared or unexpectant, but in order to signify that they did not obtain it by their efforts or diligence, but solely by the will and favour of God ; and “from heaven,” because every good gift comes to us from God. Whence thou hast two things to learn : first, that all good things come to thee

from God, and secondly, that they spring not from thy merits, but from His divine mercy and liberality. Be not then puffed up if thou receive some gift, but rather humble thyself the more before the throne of God, giving Him thanks for it, acknowledging it as a favour from His hand, and recognising thy unworthiness to receive it.

Third Point.—Consider how the Holy Spirit came down on that holy family of the Lord, and how, as St. Luke tells us, He filled them all and the whole house with His Spirit and sanctity; such is His liberality, and such the abundance and generosity with which He does mercy to His elect, that He fills them all with grace, giving to each according to his capacity. Praise Him and be grateful to Him for this liberal plenitude with which He does mercy to His own; beseech Him to manifest the like towards thee, and not to be sparing towards thy soul, since He is liberal towards all, but to communicate to thee His gifts as He so liberally communicated them on this day to the disciples.

Fourth Point.—Consider the effects produced by the Holy Ghost in that holy company; contemplate the ineffable joy with which He inundated their souls, the light He gave to their intelligences wherewith to comprehend the divine mysteries, the fire of divine love which He enkindled in their hearts, the energy and resolution He gave to their spirits in order to preach Christ to the world, and to give a thousand lives if they had them for His sake. Ponder how He banished from their souls the darkness of incredulity and the fear they had of the Jews, and how they went forth to preach to them, despising honour and life and all that the world worships. Cry out to heaven and to the Holy Spirit, saying, "Come, O Divine Spirit, and fill our hearts with the fire of Thy love; strengthen them with Thy grace and animate them with Thy fervour, in order that we may love, serve, extol, and glorify to the utmost of our strength our Lord Jesus Christ. Banish all darkness, inflame our hearts, strengthen our wills, purify our souls, cleanse our con-

sciences, and give power to our weakness, in order that we may die for His love."

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider what St. Luke says, that when the days of Pentecost (which was a feast of the Jewish law) were accomplished, the disciples being all together, the Holy Ghost came down upon them. Wherein thou shouldst ponder the fidelity of Christ to His promises, the certainty of the truth of His words, and how all will infallibly be fulfilled, as He so quickly and abundantly fulfilled that which He had given of sending the Holy Ghost. Ponder how, although seated on the throne of His glory at the right hand of His Eternal Father, He did not forget what He had promised, as men do, but He entreated for its fulfilment until He obtained its accomplishment and sent them the Holy Ghost. Whence thou shouldst draw affections of confidence in the Lord, appreciation of His word, and instruction how to keep thine, not only with men, but much more so with God. Remember how many times thou hast promised to amend and to serve Him, and how ill thou dost keep thy promises, and beg pardon thereof. Learn likewise not to be puffed up by prosperity, but to remember the lowly, as Christ forgot not His own, and neither does He forget thee.

Second Point.—Consider the thanks which all that holy congregation offered to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost for His coming. Spare not thy voice, but give thanks to God for the mercies He does thee; to the Son because He negotiates them for thee, to the

Holy Ghost because He communicates them to thee, acknowledging that they are all gifts from His Divine hand.

Third Point.—Consider the congratulations that the disciples gave to each other for this signal benefit which they had received from God, and especially those which they offered to the Blessed Virgin, to whose merits and prayers after Christ they attributed it, and how they thanked her. Consider, moreover, how, inflamed with this sacred fire, they urged each other to praise the Lord, and encouraged one another in all the things of His service, which are affections inspired by the Holy Ghost. Rejoice at the manifold joys experienced by the apostles; congratulate them on the blessing received; learn fervour from them, and entreat them all, but specially the Blessed Virgin, to obtain for thee the gift of the Holy Spirit of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider how very perfect and ardent was the love that the Holy Ghost enkindled in the hearts of the faithful, not only towards God, but likewise towards their neighbour, without limit of time or place, as a fire which warms all equally. Thus they went forth at once to communicate to their neighbour the gift they had received, and to give to others the tidings that had been given to them. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see whether thou hast a spark of this sacred fire wherewith to love both God and thy neighbour, and not to be sparing of thy gifts to thy brethren. Weep over thy poverty, and entreat the Divine Spirit to descend upon thee, and to inflame thee with love for Him and for thy neighbour, as He did the holy apostles.

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE MANNER OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider how the Holy Ghost came down in a mighty wind, because air is the breath of man, without which he cannot live, and when it fails him he dies; in like manner the Holy Ghost is the breath of the soul, without Whom it is dead to grace. Ponder that to preserve the presence of the Holy Ghost is to preserve thy life, for without Him thy soul is dead; entreat Him, serve Him, and, as far as in thee lies, compel Him not to leave thee, since He is the life of thy soul and the essence of grace, and resolve in His presence to forfeit all created things rather than to lose Him. Men of the world postpone all that they worship to the life of the body, and we should prize infinitely more that of the soul, which, as St. Basil says, has its source in the Holy Spirit.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke affirms that the Holy Ghost came as a mighty wind which filled the whole house; because, as St. Ambrose says, the Holy Ghost suffers not delay, nor tepidity, nor cowardice in His holy service, but is very fervent, active, and prompt in His resolutions and undertakings. Oh, that thou hadst a spark of this Divine Spirit wherewith to enkindle thy soul and to banish thence all tepidity! Entreat the Lord to bestow it upon thee, in order that thou mayst at once and without delay begin to serve Him. It filled the whole house, because the Holy Ghost fills all the powers of the soul in which He abides, illuminating the intelligence with His science, filling the memory with His presence, inflaming the will with His Divine fire, imprinting on the imagination the representation of Divine things, and directing all the faculties heavenwards, spiritu-

alising them so as to despise what is earthly. O most Holy Spirit, who fillest every place! leave not my poor abode empty; come, oh come, and console Thy servant, and let not a single corner of my poor dwelling be other than wholly Thine.

Third Point.—Consider that the Holy Ghost came in the form of tongues, to signify that He came to give wisdom to men and to manifest to them the most secret and exalted mysteries of heaven, and in order that they should preach and declare them to all men. Thus to the Holy Ghost is due all the science of the doctors and the wisdom of the Church, the knowledge of Catholic truth, the accuracy of the desires of pontiffs, of councils, and of prelates. Give Him many thanks for all this, and entreat Him to teach thee, to enlighten thee, and to give thee a tongue of fire wherewith to be able to praise and bless Him, and to be useful to thy neighbours by directing them heavenwards.

Fourth Point.—The Holy Ghost came in the form of fire, because fire illuminates, inflames, purifies, rises upwards, and unites things that are separate. Thus the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding with heavenly truths, inflames the will with Divine love, purifies the heart from the dross of vice, raises our desires towards heaven, and unites discordant wills. O sacred fire! come and take possession of my soul, in order that it be illuminated and enlightened to travel towards the port of glory. In flame it with the purest love of my God, purify it from all dross of vice, that, despising all earthly things, it may ever aspire to what is celestial and Divine, and remain intimately united with my Creator, and bound to my neighbour with the bond of perfect charity for ever. Amen.

*FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE MAGNITUDE AND THE VALUE OF THE GIFT OF
THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—In order to discover the sublime greatness of this gift, and to know what thou dost owe to God for it, and how thou shouldst prize it, it is desirable to consider four things, which will serve for the four points of this meditation. Namely, Who bestows it? to whom is it given? what is the gift? and wherefore is it bestowed? First, consider that the giver is God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that the value of this gift is immeasurably increased on account of the infinite sanctity, majesty, and pre-eminence of the giver, for which reason alone its value would be most exalted, even though in itself it were less great. It comes from the Father and the Son because they send it, and it is the gift of the Holy Ghost Himself because He comes voluntarily to man, urged by His infinite love and charity. Thus, on account of the source whence it comes and of the Hand that bestows it, is its value and price most exalted, and as such shouldst thou prize it and render thanks for it.

Second Point.—Consider to whom this gift is given and to whom it comes, namely, to man, who is most unworthy of so sublime a gift, with regard both to his body and to his soul. For as regards the body, he is a sink of miseries and a heap of corruption, as St. Bernard tells us; and as regards the soul, he is full of abominations and sins; and the Holy Ghost is so bountiful and so holy that He communicates Himself liberally and lovingly to those even who have most offended Him; and, as the prophet Joel says,¹ He is poured out “upon all flesh” without exception. If, therefore, it was so marvellous an act for the Eternal Word to unite Himself to one

¹ Joel ii.

man, that Christ, speaking to Nicodemus, said,¹ that "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son," boasting as it were of that love, how much more has He not shown His love in giving the Holy Ghost, not in order to unite Himself with one man, but with all by His grace. Oh, most sublime gift! how great is Thy value, and how great the mercy Thou hast shown us! Come to my poor soul, since Thou condescendest to such mire, and art not disgusted by our miseries and sins; sanctify it and honour it by Thy presence and Thy grace.

Third Point.—Consider the magnitude of this gift in itself, for it is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and essentially the gift of the Most High, because He has nothing more to bestow, having given the source of all gifts; for in this gift alone all others are contained and all graces. Wherefore did Christ say that in him who shall receive it, it shall "become a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting." Behold what a sublime gift thou hast been made worthy to receive from God, and cease not to give Him infinite thanks for it. Acquire great confidence in the Lord that He will grant thee whatsoever thou dost ask; for, having given thee the greatest of gifts, He will not refuse what is less, and He Who without merit of thine has given thee the Holy Ghost will give thee all things with Him.

Fourth Point.—The value of this sublime gift is likewise increased by the motives which urged God to bestow it, which are His infinite goodness and charity, the love He has for man, the wants which He sees man to suffer, his desolation and orphanhood. The Holy Ghost comes to console him, to strengthen him, to be his Father, Master, and Advocate, in the place of Christ our Lord, fulfilling the promise the Redeemer made before leaving His disciples when He said,² "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete" and Comforter, "that He may abide with you for ever." If, then, as Christ tells us,

¹ John iii.

² John xiv.

a cup of cold water given to the needy is of such value that He will give in return for it eternal life, of what value must not the Holy Ghost be, Who is given to men when in such dire necessity? Raise thy heart to God, and entreat all the inhabitants of heaven to praise His infinite goodness, and offer Him thyself all the praises given Him by all creatures visible and invisible. Perceiving how bound thou art to be grateful and to serve so exalted a Lord for so incomparable a favour and so sublime a gift, think what thou shouldst give Him in return for it. Weep to see how ill thou hast served Him heretofore and offer thyself at His feet for His perpetual slave.

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THEY HAD
RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—St. Luke says that when the apostles had received the Holy Ghost “they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.” Wherein thou shouldst ponder, first, that both men and women received the Holy Spirit, and the men alone preached, whilst the women were silent and remained recollected, because to each one was given grace to live holily according to their state and profession. And, as St. Paul says, although the Spirit is the same in all, yet it produces not in all similar effects, but it distributes its gifts and graces according to the condition of each one. Thus it wrought recollection and silence in the women and the power of the word in the men. Consider what is thy state and profession, and entreat the Holy Ghost to give thee His gifts in order that thou mayst fulfil thy duties, and let not the evil spirit deceive thee into believing anything to be from the Holy Ghost which is not in accordance with thy condition.

Second Point.—Consider what science and wisdom and what fervour of soul the Holy Ghost infused into those poor fishermen, and how they went forth at once with courage and resolution to preach to the people, speaking in various languages to the great admiration of all. Bless the Lord, Who in one moment works such wonders, and acquire great confidence in God Who strengthens thee, and in Whom thou canst do all things. Recognise the facility with which He makes the ignorant learned and sinners preachers, and hope in the Lord that He will give thee His Spirit and the courage necessary for what He requires of thee, and that in an instant He will instruct and strengthen thee for the accomplishment of what He enjoins, however arduous it may be, as He taught and strengthened the apostles for such great things so much above their strength.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that the people, hearing the apostles thus suddenly begin to preach, at first mocked them, and censured them as drunkards and madmen who were excited with wine. Such are the judgments of men; but they did not therefore desist from carrying on their ministry and preaching. From the consideration of this point thou shouldst draw, first, courage and resolution to endure the scorn of men for the love of God, as the apostles did; and secondly, a profound conviction that the works of God attract the contradictions and scoffings of men, and that thou shouldst not therefore abandon them, but rather persevere therein, as the holy apostles did, strengthened and enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit, Who will not fail thee if thou be faithful to Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the conclusion and winding up of this event, and how St. Peter, as captain of that heavenly company, came forward to defend the truth, and addressed the people with such fervour of spirit that He converted five thousand persons to the faith of Jesus Christ: such fruit do they obtain who preach with the voice of the Holy Ghost. Wherefrom thou shouldst

learn to be silent, and not to defend thyself when others condemn thee, trusting to God, Who will defend thee as He did the apostles by means of St. Peter, and clearing them from this imputation with so much profit both of spiritual merit before God and of temporal honour before men. Learn likewise how much fruit preaching with fervour of spirit produces, and beseech God to bestow this on thee, and implore the Divine Spirit Himself to teach thee, as He taught the disciples of the Lord.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE ENDS FOR WHICH THE HOLY GHOST CAME.

First Point.—The first end for which the Holy Ghost came down on men was in order to be their Father in the place of Christ, to console, to shelter, to protect, and to defend them as His children, according to the oft-repeated promise of Christ when consoling the apostles at His departure, whereby He engaged to send them the Divine Spirit, Who should replace Him, and be their Father, their Comforter, and Protector, as He had been whilst living in the world. Whence thou shouldst derive affections of great joy at the possession of such a Father, Who leaves thee not, but is always with thee, and at having such a Protector and Comforter as the Holy Ghost. Contemplate deliberately this gift, and note what thou owest to the Holy Ghost as to a Father, and how grateful thou shouldst be to Him Who assists thee in thy needs, Who consoles thee in thy sorrows, and Who defends thee in thy encounters; and have not recourse therein to creatures, abandoning thy Creator, lest He should abandon thee if thou forsake Him.

Second Point.—The second end for which the Holy Ghost came was in order to teach men and to be their

Master, according to those words of Christ when taking leave of His apostles,¹ "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom My Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." From which thou shouldst learn the conformity which exists between Christ and the Holy Ghost in doctrine, since in no single word is there the least discrepancy between them. Solicit this grace not to contradict others, but to accept all that is said and taught thee, which is a virtue of the Holy Ghost. Recognise how sublime a Master thou hast; take thy place in His school; become His disciple; consult Him in thy doubts; learn from none other. Entreat Him to teach thee, hearken to His voice, and follow the light He bestows, and thou wilt always do right.

Third Point.—The Holy Ghost came likewise to banish sin from the world, as Christ foretold when He said,² "When He (the Paraclete) shall come, He will convince the world of sin." O Holy Spirit! illuminate my heart and banish from my soul all the darkness of the sins of my past life, and permit me not to fall into them again. For this reason the Holy Ghost descended on Christ in the Jordan in the form of a dove, because, as the dove has no gall, so neither does the Holy Ghost suffer any sin where He abides. Ponder the purity He requires in the soul in which He dwells, and purify thine from every kind of fault, in order that He may abide therein.

Fourth Point.—Another end for which the Holy Ghost came was in order to confirm the apostles in grace for the ministry to which they were called. Thus St. Luke tells us³ that the tongues of fire "sat upon every one of them," because He came to remain, and not temporarily, as He does on others. This is a most signal favour from God, and as far as in thee lies thou shouldst strive to merit and to obtain it. Give thanks to the

¹ John xiv.² John xvi.³ Acts ii.

Holy Ghost for having conferred it upon the apostles ; entreat Him with tears to take up His abode in thy soul, not to pass hastily away, but to make it His dwelling-place. On thy part, endeavour to be pleasing to Him, detain Him, and compel Him to remain, by purity of conscience, by humble prayer, with lamentations and good works. Consider leisurely whether there be in thee anything displeasing to Him ; remove it with diligence, and adorn thy abode with all that thou conceivest to be most pleasing to Him.

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Let us meditate to-day on the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which Isaias makes mention in the eleventh chapter of his prophecy, and which he gives in the following order : "The spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and of the fear of the Lord," with which we are armed to resist the temptations of Satan, in order that we may not be ensnared by him. Wherefore it is well to meditate first on the favour done us by the Divine Spirit by infusing into us, as St. Thomas¹ teaches, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, together with His divine gifts, and by strengthening us with them for the continual warfare that we have to wage against vice. St. Gregory² in his "Treatise on Morals" explains in detail the vices against which we are armed by each of these gifts : these are to suggest the points of this meditation.

¹ Thom. 1, 2, 9, 68.

² Greg. Mor. 2, c. 26.

First Point.—The first is the gift of wisdom, which, according to St. Gregory, dispels and extirpates folly and ignorance concerning the things of God, which engender weariness in the soul, indispose it for intercourse and communication with God, as well as for His service. The gift of wisdom, on the contrary, produces taste and relish for celestial things, and banishes the weariness caused by ignorance and folly. Observe whether thy soul harbours the like; and when thou art threatened therewith, cry out to the Holy Ghost, and entreat Him to fortify thee with the gift of wisdom, and to banish from thee all distaste for the service of God.

Second Point.—The second is the gift of understanding, because the Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding of men against the mists and clouds which the devil interposes in order to obscure the truths of our holy faith. Thus, when these arise, have recourse to the Holy Spirit, in order that He may enlighten thy understanding and increase it in thee, making thee steadfast in the truths of faith, and dispelling the darkness which the evil spirit interposes to obscure them.

Third Point.—The third is the gift of science or knowledge; this concerns inferior things, and arms us against deceit, forgetfulness, and carelessness, rendering us wary and cautious on occasion, and not hasty lest we fail in the service of God.

Fourth Point.—The fourth is the gift of counsel, which arms us against imprudence, teaching us how to preserve the right medium in the exercise of the cardinal virtues, without falling into extremes.

Fifth Point.—The fifth is the gift of fortitude, which is opposed to weakness and pusillanimity, giving us courage not to yield to the enemy, and strength wherewith to fight until he is conquered. What would become of us if the Holy Ghost were to withdraw His hand and leave us to our poverty and weakness? Think over this, and how thou owest all that thou hast to His mercy and protection, and entreat Him with humility to strengthen

thee with His grace, and not to permit thee to fall into temptation.

Sixth Point.—The sixth is the gift of godliness or piety, which opposes itself to hardness of heart towards our neighbours, and inclines us to succour, assist, and console them in their trials, and this is a gift of the Holy Ghost.

Seventh Point.—The seventh and last is the gift of the holy fear of God, which restrains us and keeps us in check, in order that we may not offend Him by rash daring, pride, and presumption. Meditate at leisure on each of these gifts; ponder their importance by the consideration of the need thou hast of them, and of what would befall thee, if any one of them failed thee. Examine thy conscience, observing in which of these gifts thou art wanting, and which of them has decreased in thy soul, and beseech the Divine Spirit to deign to renew it in thee, to console thee, and to fortify and assist thee with His gifts and graces.

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the First Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, FATHER, SON, AND
HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider the incomprehensible majesty of God, Who, being one in essence, is three in Person. Rise up with admiration to the throne of His greatness, to venerate His power, to appreciate His sanctity and the extreme perfection of His Godhead. Contemplate the eternity of His beginning, that existence of Himself independent of any other being, and that omnipotence without limit. Behold Him adored, worshipped, feared, loved and obeyed by the seraphim and cherubim, and by all the choirs of angels. Cover thy face as they do before

His throne, confessing that thou canst not comprehend His majesty nor His infinite greatness. Prostrate thyself at His feet ; reverence, worship, fear and love Him as they do ; tremble at His power ; cease not to praise Him, and prepare thyself to obey Him, as the angels do in heaven.

Second Point.—Consider how the Father proceeds from none other, and how the Son proceeds from the Father by knowledge. The Father, contemplating Himself and knowing Himself, thus engenders His own image in all things like unto Himself ; and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the intimate love of both, and is the bond of union between the two. Contemplate this sublime truth, and ask of the Lord a lively faith in so exalted a mystery ; humble thyself before Him, acknowledging thy dulness, and that thou hast neither the capacity nor power to know Him as He is.

Third Point.—Consider how, being three distinct Persons, they are equal one with the other, neither existing before the others nor after the others ; neither being either greater or less. Nor is there any difference of will, but all three are unanimous, conformable to each other, and united and bound together with the bond of eternal charity. Praise God for so ineffable a mystery and for such inaccessible sanctity, and endeavour to imitate His virtues by manifesting charity and peace towards all, avoiding all desires of preferences, exceptions, and singularity.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, although the three Divine Persons are in all things equal, yet to each is attributed especial prerogatives and attributes—to the Father, omnipotence and the work of the creation ; to the Son, wisdom and the work of redemption ; to the Holy Ghost, love and the work of sanctification. Raise thy heart to the most Holy Trinity ; contemplate its perfections, and the attributes, eminence, and properties of each one of the Divine Persons. Praise the Lord for them ; rejoice at His sublime excellence and perfection, and see

how much thou owest Him. Render thanks to the Father because He created thee, as well as all things else, in order that thou mightst serve Him ; to the Son, because He redeemed thee, becoming man for thee ; to the Holy Ghost, because He has sanctified thee, communicating His grace to thee so abundantly. Beg pardon for thy ingratitude, and solicit grace to be grateful for the future, and to profit by the favours thou receivest from the hands of God.

FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE FAREWELL OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES ACCORDING
TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW XXVIII.

Before going up to heaven Christ assembled His apostles, communicated to them the power He had received from His Eternal Father in heaven and on earth, and commanded them to go and preach to the whole world what He had taught them, and to baptize all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, promising them to be with them till the end of time.

First Point.—Consider how Christ says that all power has been given Him in heaven and on earth, to bind and to loose, to judge the world and to draw it to His service. Rejoice to have such a Father and so powerful a Lord, and acquire great confidence of obtaining what thou dost solicit, since He Who loves thee and so earnestly desires thy welfare has so much authority both in heaven and on earth. Ponder the power and majesty to which Christ was exalted by the Father on account of the profound humility with which He subjected Himself to men on earth, and derive thence a firm purpose of humbling thyself, and of enduring the affronts and scorn of men in the hope of receiving thy reward from God.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ limited not the power He had received to Himself alone, and disdained not to share it with men, but rather of His pure bounty He communicated it to His disciples, for the good of the whole world. Give Him many thanks for this favour, and for the benefit thou derivest thence when from the hands of His ministers thou receivest grace and the remission of thy sins. Learn not to deal out sparingly to others the gifts thou receivest from God, avariciously hoarding them for thyself, but learn of His liberality to use them for the good of all. Behold how Christ extended His power all over the universe, both for the present and for future generations, to the end of ages, and set no bounds to thy generosity, but extend it to all, in imitation of the Saviour.

Third Point.—Ponder those words of Christ, “Baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” For the first thing necessary is the faith which is received in baptism, and the second thing is that it be accompanied by good works, keeping the commandments of God. Derive hence a high appreciation of divine faith, without which none can be saved, and taking to thyself the words of the Saviour, endeavour to instruct all in the way to heaven, sparing no effort to direct them on the road thither.

Fourth Point.—Ponder those last words of the Redeemer, “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” Consider how great a favour this is, and how great is the love from which it springs; contemplate thy Master ever by thy side, assisting and strengthening thee; render Him a thousand thanks for this benefit, and let His presence encourage thee to undertake whatever may suggest itself as conducive to His service, confident that His grace will enable thee successfully to carry out whatsoever thou undertakest for His love.

*FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE VI.)

Christ exhorts us in this Gospel to be merciful to our neighbours as God also is merciful to us, forgiving injuries, neither judging nor condemning others, because the same measure that we use towards others shall be used towards us, and if we consider our own faults, we shall not judge severely those of our neighbour.

First Point.—Contemplate the infinite mercy of God, which our Redeemer proposes to us as our model, and ponder the offences that are daily committed against Him throughout the universe, and how He endures them with unspeakable patience. Ponder how, being able so easily to avenge Himself, He is so far from doing so, that with intense compassion He does good to those that offend Him, and actually preserves their life, and sends them sunshine, water, air, health, and food for the preservation of their existence. Remember that He is thy Father, although thou art so unworthy a child of His, and be thou also merciful to thy neighbour, as thy Father is merciful towards thee, in order that thou mayst deserve on earth to call thyself His, and in heaven to enjoy Him hereafter.

Second Point.—Consider in detail the offences that God has endured and still endures from thee, and which He daily pardons. Reflect how thou wouldst long ago have been in hell had God used thee with the severity that thou makest use of towards thy neighbour. See what great need thou hast that God should pardon thee, and do thou forgive others, “for with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.”

Third Point.—Meditate those words of Christ, “Judge not and you shall not be judged.” Consider how fallible

are the judgments of men ; recall how often thou hast been deceived in thine, and that only to the justice and tribunal of Christ does it belong to judge others. Weep over the faults thou hast committed in this regard, and purpose amendment before God, and thou wilt not be judged by men, nor condemned on this account before the Lord. Take His advice and look to thine own faults, and thou wilt not be preoccupied about those of thy neighbour.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, what the Saviour says, “Give and it shall be given to you : good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over ;” because as God is the remunerator, and He is in Himself so rich and generous, He will render to us a hundred for one for whatever we give for His sake. Oh, how great is the virtue of almsgiving, and of both spiritual and corporal works of mercy, since God so pledges Himself to reward us for them with His own hand, and with such abundant profit and usury as is a hundred for one ! Ponder how pleasing this virtue of charity is in the sight of God, how profitable to thy soul, and what spiritual and temporal blessings God bestows on those who practise it. Draw hence a firm resolution to exercise it towards thy neighbour to the utmost of thy power, and implore the grace of God to keep thy resolve.

SIXTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE LIFE LEAD BY THE FIRST CHRISTIANS, AND THE
ELECTION OF ST. BARNABAS TO THE APOSTOLATE BY
THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke tells us that after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles,¹

¹ Acts ii.

although the newly baptized Christians were so numerous that in Jerusalem alone on the first day there were more than eight thousand, they lived in such perfect peace and concord that they had, as it were, but one heart and one mind. Their possessions were in common, and all that they had they sold, and laid the price thereof at the feet of the apostles; they frequented Holy Communion every day, and passed their time in prayer and good works. All this St. Luke narrates in order that we should see the effects produced in those first Christians by the grace of the Holy Ghost. Place thy hand on thy breast and see whether He has wrought the like effects in thee, whether thou hast corresponded to His grace by the performance of similar acts, and whether thou givest proof of His dwelling within thee. Entreat the Lord to send the Holy Ghost upon thee in order that thou mayst imitate their lives; blush at the difference that exists between thy life and theirs, at the tepidity in which thou lingerest, and at seeing how ill thou dost correspond to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

Second Point.—Consider how one of these faithful Christians was St. Barnabas, who, with St. Paul, was chosen by the Holy Ghost to be an apostle of the Lord, because of all others he exercised himself in holiness and in fervour of preaching, whereby he merited to receive this favour from God. Ponder how God does not limit Himself to time, since after Christ was already in heaven He chose these two saints for His apostles, because their life and preaching rendered them worthy of that dignity. Give Him thanks for this, and take courage by their example to serve Him fervently, despising the world, and giving thyself wholly to His service.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Barnabas traversed the world as a pilgrim, illuminating it with the light of his teaching; consider what trials he underwent, what persecutions he suffered, what victories he won, and what fruit he produced in souls by means of his preaching and of his holy life. Acquire energy from his example

to walk in his footsteps, if God should call thee to the sacred ministry, confiding in the Divine power that He will give thee grace in proportion to the necessities of thy vocation and of the ministry and office intrusted to thee, as He did to St. Barnabas.

Fourth Point.—Consider his martyrdom, and how he sealed with his blood the evangelical doctrine that he had taught, giving his life joyfully for Christ; and then raise thine eyes to heaven and contemplate the crown with which God rewarded him in the kingdom of His glory. His toils passed away and his torments were soon over, but his glory endures and will endure for ever. Contemplate this truth attentively, and enkindle in thy heart lively desires of serving God and of suffering for Him, and ask His grace to fulfil them, and, like St. Barnabas, to attain everlasting happiness.

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

First Point.—Contemplate the magnitude of this sublime gift, in which the Redeemer of the world gives thee His Body, His Blood, His Soul, His very Self, alive and glorious, and with Himself His Divinity, a jewel of such price that it cannot be compared with any created thing in heaven or on earth. If, therefore, it may happen to thee at times to find thyself so obliged for an earthly gift, which thou receivest from a mortal man, that thou knowest not how to repay it, and that thou mayst even resolve to give thy life in return, consider what value thou shouldst set on this jewel which the King of heaven has given thee, and see how thou canst be grateful enough for it. Weep over thy ingratitude, quicken thy faith and knowledge of this mystery, so as to prize and

venerate this sublime gift, and to be as grateful for it as thou shouldst be.

Second Point.—Consider the reverence, the respect, the veneration and devotion that the angels and saints of heaven have for this Divine Sacrament. See with what sentiments of love, fear, and reverence they gaze thereon, and what causes move them to this veneration. Marvel at beholding so great a Lord confined in so small a space, to see Him Who is seated on the throne of the Most High contained in a host on the altar, Him Whom the seraphim worship with trembling awe in the hands of a mortal man, and Him, the sole vision of Whom fills the blessed with rapture, become food and entering the vile hearts of men. Compare this act with that glory, this humility with that majesty, this dwelling-place with that sublime throne in light inaccessible. Marvel with the angels at such condescension in the midst of such exalted majesty, and at such an excess of love, and cease not to venerate, to praise, and to bless the Lord for it.

Third Point.—Ponder the facility we have for receiving and possessing this incomparable gift, and how, although so sublime, thou canst behold It, approach It, communicate with It, and receive It into the breast whenever thou pleasest, without difficult negotiations, support of patrons, or human endeavours. Consider what difficulties are encountered in obtaining speech with the monarchs of the earth, and in securing any gift or favour from men; what preliminaries, what solicitations, and what exertions have to be made; and how easily does God dispense to us the highest of all gifts, a prize of greater value than anything that we can conceive. Give Him many thanks for this, and, at the same time accuse thyself of tepidity in the frequentation of this sacred table, and of lack of reverence for this heavenly food, and humble thyself before the Blessed Sacrament, imploring pardon.

Fourth Point.—Consider, on the one hand, with what

reverence this sacrament should be honoured, and with what purity of soul and body It should be received; and, on the other, behold with what irreverence It is treated by heretics and infidels, with what evil consciences It is received by sinners, and with what tepidity It is approached even by some priests and religious, who should be better prepared. Consider what offences are committed against the Lord through this incomparable favour that He does man, in giving Himself to him and compassionate Him, weep and bewail His sufferings in this Sublime Sacrament. Ponder His patience amidst so many injuries, and learn to suffer those inflicted on thee, and, as far as thou canst, prevent those that are done to God in the Blessed Sacrament.

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
OF THE ALTAR.

First Point.—In order to have some conception of the immense love that Christ manifests towards us in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar, it is well to ponder four things, which may serve as points for this meditation: namely, Who bestows it? what is the gift bestowed? to whom? and for what motive? With regard to the first, consider that He Who bestows this gift is Christ, true God and true man, the Only-Begotten of the Father, as God His equal in all things, infinite, immense, omnipotent, all-wise, noble, rich, and powerful, and possessing all the other attributes of God, Word of the Father, and consubstantial with Him. Ponder what gift could proceed from so great a Lord, from the God of God! On which account alone the gift would be of infinite value, even though It were not, as It is, infinite

in Itself. Whence it follows that the love with which It is given is infinite, as the Person Who bestows It is infinite. Dig deep into this mine of reflection, and marvel at the greatness of the love of Christ in this most Holy Sacrament; give Him many thanks for It, and in return offer Him with gratitude all the love of thy heart.

Second Point.—Consider what is the gift bestowed, which is, as we have said, His Flesh, His Blood, His Soul, and His Divinity, united in the Person of the Divine Word, of the second Person of the most Holy Trinity, His omnipotence, His wisdom, His sanctity, His grace without any reserve. He does not give thee His treasures only, but, what is more, He gives Himself with them—a gift so great, that no angel ever received the like; neither could man have conceived it with his imagination, or desired it with his will, far less given voice to his desire by asking for it with his lips. Truly the magnitude of the love that our Redeemer bears towards us exceeds all that human intelligence can conceive; only Divine wisdom could imagine so marvellous a scheme of love, and find means to realise it. If here on earth a jewel bestowed by a prince is prized because it is his gift, and is preserved in a setting of gold and silver, and made an heirloom for a perpetual memorial of the fact; think and consider how we should prize a treasure of such infinite value as this, with which no created thing will bear comparison; this jewel from the treasury of God, given by His Divine Hand, and in which we receive Himself who bestows It. Beg of God His grace wherewith to comprehend Its value, and that reverence and respect with which thou shouldst treat It, and endeavour from the consideration of the value of this gift to conceive the immensity of His love.

Third Point.—Consider to whom it is given—namely, to man, a vile worm, a heap of earth, a sink of corruption, formed from the dust of the earth; and in particular to thee, who, both as regards the body and the soul, art a source of miseries and sins. And consider that God

deigns to come into thy dwelling and to enter an abode so obscure, so vile, and unworthy, only for thy good. Verily the immense charity that He has for man and for thee in particular could alone move Him to this. The magnificent temple erected by King Solomon was one of the wonders of the world, and although it was a marvel of magnificence, riches, and perfection, yet he ceased not to wonder that God should deign to visit it. How much more might he not wonder, and with reason, that God should come and inhabit the bodies of sinful men out of the greatness of His love for them? O Lord! may the angels eternally praise Thee, for I have neither voice nor knowledge how to praise and bless Thee as Thou deservest for such proofs of love. That Thou shouldst permit me to appear in Thy presence, being Who Thou art and I what I am, were a most exalted favour and a great proof of love; but how much more that Thou shouldst come to my poor abode and give Thyself to be my food! Oh, Lord! this exceeds my poor capacity. I can neither comprehend it nor worthily praise Thee for it.

Fourth Point.—Consider the motive that impelled Him to give Himself to man as food, confining His greatness within the limits of a host, not once, but many times, and in so many places, at all hours, for all persons, great and small, rich and poor, who may desire to receive Him. It was for no personal interest but for our sake, and for our welfare, for our salvation, and because of the love He bears us, that He conceived this unheard-of scheme for uniting Himself intimately with man and with thee in His virtues, as food is assimilated with the person who eats it; neither could love be strained any further. Contemplate the fire that burns in His breast when He enters thine, and consider Who it is that so loves thee and enters under thy roof, Who it is that has such tenderness for thee, and what thou shouldst do for Him. Consider what an obligation He lays thee under, what a debt thou dost contract by receiving this favour from His hand. Cast thyself at His feet, recognise thy unworthiness, and

acknowledge thyself His debtor. Offer Him the praise and thanks of all creatures, together with thy soul and body, thy understanding, thy memory, and thy will, all that thou art, and all that thou canst to serve Him eternally.

SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE REVERENCE, ESTEEM, AND DEVOTION WE SHOULD
MANIFEST TOWARDS THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT,
AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

First Point.—Consider, first, that, as St. Peter Damian observes, we owe this Sacrament in a great measure to the Blessed Virgin, because she gave Christ the Body and Blood which He has left us in this Divine Food. Thus thou shouldst consider, as is indeed the fact, that thou receivest part of the flesh and blood of this heavenly Lady, according to which St. Bernard, whenever he communicated, imagined himself to receive a drop of milk from her most pure breast, with which he feasted and delighted his soul. Oh, if with these or the like considerations we all approached the sacred table, how much greater fruit should we not derive than we do from our communions! Acquire from this meditation a knowledge of what thou owest to the Blessed Virgin, and of the respect and devotion with which thou shouldst treat so precious a portion of herself.

Second Point.—Consider the appreciation the Blessed Virgin always had of this Divine Sacrament, which St. Ambrose tells us she especially recommended to the care of the apostles at the time of her death as the most precious treasure of her heart. Consider her words as addressed to thee; hearken to them as from her lips; ponder how thou canst put them into practice, and how

excel in devotion and reverence for this most heavenly sacrament, and leave nothing untried to achieve this.

Third Point.—Consider the frequency with which the Blessed Virgin herself received this most Holy Sacrament, many grave authors affirming that she communicated daily from the hand of St. John the Evangelist, with unspeakable consolation to her own soul and edification to the Church. This is equally the case with those souls who worthily prepare themselves to receive it frequently, in imitation of her example, and profit by this celestial bread, which seasoned as it were the three measures of meal, viz., the body, soul, and divinity of Christ, for the spiritual health of the whole human race. Consider this point, and derive thence great affection for this most Divine Sacrament, and a firm purpose of imitating this Lady, and pleasing her by preparing thyself to communicate frequently according to her example.

Fourth Point.—Consider the dispositions with which the Blessed Virgin prepared herself for the sacred table, the sensible devotion with which she approached to communicate, and the thanksgiving she offered after receiving. Penetrate by meditation into the interior of that most blessed soul; contemplate its purity, and the interior acts of love and charity, faith, hope, supplication, contemplation, and humility with which she disposed herself to receive her own Son in the blessed Sacrament. Behold how far she exceeded the angels in all this, and with what purity greater than that of the heavens she approached to receive Him whom she had brought forth. With what sweet colloquies and memories she entertained Him in her soul, recalling the time when she bore Him in her womb, gave Him birth with such intense joy and delight, fed Him with the milk from her pure breast, and carried Him in her arms. Behold what caresses and favours she received in return from the Son, who finding himself again in her breast, recalled all that took place during His former sojourn there. Contemplate all these things, and entreat the Blessed Virgin to give thee a

share of the preparedness with which she received Him, and to obtain for thee the grace to purify thy soul for His coming, and to render due thanks after receiving Him.

SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE SUPPER—(LUKE XIV.)

The Gospel places before us the picture of a great supper that a householder gave, and those who had been invited having excused themselves, he ordered the poor, the blind, the lame, and the maimed to be called in to enjoy it, depriving thereof those who refused to attend.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, the householder is Christ Himself, Who ordered the great supper of the most blessed Sacrament for the nourishment of souls, and invited many to come to it; because He most generously offers it to all who are willing to come and partake of His banquet. Ponder the love He manifests towards men in preparing for them this heavenly supper; what liberality He exhibits in not closing the door against any one, but rather calling and inviting all, saying: "Come and eat, My friends." See the care and providence He has over His chosen ones, since, whilst they are unmindful of it, He prepares a banquet and supper for them. Draw from all this ardent affections of love for Him Who so loves thee, of confidence in Him Who is so solicitous and anxious for thy welfare, of gratitude to Him Who is so liberal towards thee, and of compassion for thy neighbour, being generous towards all after the example of Christ.

Second Point.—Consider how the Saviour says that He made a great supper, and yet He only prepared one dish, and of this meat one only morsel; but such that alone it surpasses all food of heaven and of earth. Contem-

plate the excellence and price of this morsel, and the perfection and substance of this meat, which is no other than the Body and Blood of the Lord Himself Who bestows it. Therefore does He call it "meat indeed," because it alone is true food ; for none other sustains the soul and preserves true life, that of the Spirit, but this one alone. Marvel at the wisdom of the Most High, and at the inventions of His infinite charity which found this means of doing good to man. See how much He gives thee in this one morsel, and how thou shouldst prepare thyself to receive Him worthily, and how greatly thou art bound to correspond by faithful service towards Him Who confers such a favour upon thee. Cry out with admiration at the wisdom and love of God ; cast thyself at His feet, rendering Him a thousand thanks for it, and offering thyself to His service.

Third Point.—Consider the ingratitude and negligence of men, who, being invited by the Lord, not as on former occasions, to carry the cross, or to do penance, nor to the trials entailed in the observance of His holy law, but to a most sweet and delectable banquet, yet excuse themselves from attending it, as the guests of the Gospel excused themselves from coming to the supper, neglecting this most heavenly manna for the savourless and worthless viands of the world. Weep before the Lord at this blindness, and entreat two things of Him : first, to hold thee by the hand, and not to permit thee to fall into the like ; secondly, to have pity on these worldlings, and to send them preachers and teachers who shall enlighten and undeceive them with the light of His doctrine, and attract them to His table, and thereby to His service.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the householder called in the poor instead of the rich, and filled his table with guests who partook of his supper, each one of those who had excused themselves being replaced by many others. Wherein thou shouldst consider how the schemes and decrees of God are always accomplished, and how every

one who abandons Him is replaced by an abundance of others, and do thou correspond to the call of God and accomplish His will, lest another fill thy place, and enjoy the crown prepared for thee. Ponder how great would be thy loss if thou didst forfeit it, and how little God needs thee, Who has thousands better than thee to put in thy place, and to reward with the prize destined for thee.

SIXTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE GUESTS WHO EXCUSED THEMSELVES FROM COMING
TO THE SUPPER.

First Point.—Consider what were the excuses made by the guests who came not to the supper, and what the chastisement with which they were punished. The first excused himself because he had bought a farm or land, and must needs go to see it; whereby are described those who are prevented from coming to this heavenly table and banquet by the enjoyments of property and of the perishable wealth of this world, who prefer earthly things to heavenly ones, and their property to Holy Communion and the welfare of their souls. Consider how greatly in error these are, and how deceived they will find themselves to have been, when, the drama of this life being over, they discover their poverty and nakedness, and find how great a good they have lost, which might have been theirs, had they but approached this table and banquet of the Lord. Weep over their loss, and be warned by the fate of others, lest, blinded by the greed of temporal wealth, thou also neglect heavenly concerns.

Second Point.—The second guest said he had bought five yoke of oxen, and must needs go and try them, and so could not come. Oh, blindness of the sons of Adam! who for the sake of a few vile cattle abandon the table of

the Most High! These are they who, for the sake of avariciously labouring to amass wealth, neglect Holy Communion, and conceive it to be sufficient excuse for neglecting God that they are so employed, and thus they end by losing all; they lose God, because they abandon Him; and their wealth, because they succeed not, and it melts in their hands. Derive hence fresh light for thy soul, and a firm resolution to seek first God and spiritual things and the profit of thy soul, confident that thou wilt thus the better secure thy interest, and that thou wilt obtain from the Lord both spiritual and temporal advantage.

Third Point.—Consider the third excuse given by him who said that he had married a wife, and so could not come; in which the Redeemer describes the impediment found by many who abandon Holy Communion in order to give themselves to sensual and carnal pleasures and to vices, which are the great opponents of this heavenly food. Consider the purity of soul and body which is required for Holy Communion, since, when Achimelech fed the soldiers of David with the bread from the table of proposition, which figured the Sacred Host, he required that they should be chaste and pure, having abstained from intercourse even with their own wives. And yet sensual men deliver themselves up in such wise to the inordinate appetites of the flesh, that they hesitate not for their sake to deprive themselves of the Bread of Life. Oh, most lamentable blindness, over which we might well weep with tears of blood! That men should exchange life for death, the bread of angels for that of brute animals, and heavenly delights for sensual pleasures. Weep over the perdition of so many whom this vice carries away, and ask of God to hold thee by the hand, in order that it overcome not thy weakness. Withdraw from all occasions thereof, and study carefully to acquire and to preserve the purity of thy soul and body, in order that thou mayst be worthy to approach this heavenly table.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Gospel tells us that the householder was angry with those who excused themselves, because before God false excuses are of no avail. He knows the secret intentions, and that these persons could, without forfeiting their property or foregoing their wives, employ themselves in His service. Consider how often He has called thee, and how many times thou hast excused thyself from coming to serve Him, depriving thyself of His holy table, and leaving that food for others. Learn, then, to despise what is earthly in order to acquire that which is heavenly ; abandon the world in order to deserve this Divine Food ; forsake the feasting of men and the table of the world for that of Christ and for the banquet of His Body, in which thou wilt find all sweetness and all manner of delights that thou canst desire.

SIXTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE INVITATION THAT CHRIST ADDRESSES TO US IN
THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

First Point.—Consider how, according to the Gospel of St. Luke, Christ said that many were called to the supper, and yet we are only told of three who excused themselves. Wherein thou mayst perceive the grief caused to Him by those who refuse to come to His table ; for three appeared to Him a great many, and in each one that failed Him He seemed to miss a million. Discern therein the desire that the Lord has of attracting mankind to this banquet, and how grieved He is by those who excuse themselves from approaching Holy Communion. Endeavour then to give Him pleasure in this, first in thine own person, by preparing thyself to receive it worthily ; and secondly, in that of thy neighbour, urging

all to this heavenly banquet by thy example, prayers, and exhortations.

Second Point.—Consider the great goodness and compassion of God, Who wearies not of calling and attracting men to the enjoyment of His delights, although they despise them, but the first guests having excused themselves from coming to His supper, He sends His servants to call many others to come and partake thereof. Oh, immense bounty of God, Who shuts not the door of His clemency on account of our offences, but rather opens it yet wider and calls more persons to His table when some despise and offend Him. Draw hence motives for blessing and praising God for His infinite mercy and patience, and a lesson not to let thine be exhausted by the ingratitude and injuries thou mayst receive from thy neighbour, but to be the more generous and pitiful towards others in proportion as they correspond less towards thee, expecting thy recompense from the Lord, and doing good solely for His love and to accomplish His Will.

Third Point.—Consider how, instead of calling the rich, He called the poor, the sick, and the despised of this world, because God accepts not the person of man, neither does He regard the exterior of the body but the interior of the soul. Ponder how in His presence neither the soul of the nobleman nor that of the rich man is preferred on account of his nobility or wealth to that of the peasant or of the beggar, but each one is valued according to his virtues, and oftentimes God prizes more that of the poor and despised of the world, because it is more submissive to His law, than that of the rich and esteemed, whose life is perchance not in accordance therewith, as we witness in this Gospel the rich despising His call and invitation whilst the poor obeyed and came at the first summons. Draw hence great light not to allow thyself to be blinded by the splendour of nobility nor by the opulence of worldly wealth, but to have regard to virtue, and to esteem men in proportion as they practise it. Learn to prize that which God values,

to despise what He despises, and to take more account of interior virtue than of exterior appearance, which is mere tinsel.

Fourth Point.—Consider what sort of punishment was inflicted on those who despised the banquet and refused to attend it: “I say to you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of My supper;” because the Lord chastises those who abandon it by depriving them of all taste and relish for spiritual things, permitting that they shall become to them savourless and wearisome, and that they shall abandon them and be lost, which is the greatest punishment He can inflict. Humble thyself in His presence, and entreat Him to chastise thee in a fatherly manner, and not so rigorously as to withdraw from thee all devotion and relish for heavenly things. Resolve in His presence not to neglect prayer, nor Holy Communion, nor penance, nor the Word of God, for any earthly consideration, lest God chastise thee by withdrawing from thee all relish for them.

SIXTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT AS A SACRIFICE.

First Point.—Consider the excellence of this sacrifice and the sublime worth of this holocaust offered on the altar, which is the same as that which was offered on the cross, namely, not of animals or birds, as in the ancient sacrifices, but the very Son of the living God abiding in the sacrament for our love. And so great is that love in Him, that, not content with offering Himself once on the altar of the cross, He offers Himself daily in an unbloody manner by the hands of priests on many altars and in many places, with the same love as on the first occasion, in an acceptable sacrifice to His Eternal Father for

mankind. Let such intense charity ravish thy heart, and such immense and burning love steal away thy soul. Enter into the breast of that Lord, and contemplate what passes therein, when, being glorious in heaven, He comes to offer Himself a holocaust and sacrifice on earth. Offer thy soul and thy life, thy body and thy blood, in sacrifice to God with this holy sacrifice, in order that its virtue may supply what is wanting to thy works and render them acceptable to God.

Second Point.—Consider how, in virtue of the words of the priest, Christ our Lord comes down from heaven and abides sacramentally in the host and in the chalice. And the bread ceases to be bread and the wine is no longer wine, but both are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, representing His Death in this manner, that, as they were separated during the three days of His Death, so also on the altar they should appear separate in the power of those words. Consider how willingly Christ offers Himself in this host to suffer again for thy sins, and in order to recall to thy mind His Passion and Death. Whence thou shouldst derive sentiments of love and gratitude, and an increased esteem for His Blood and a desire of always bearing in mind His Passion, in order to serve Him; and offer thyself to die for His sake Who gave Himself for thine.

Third Point.—Remember that a sacrifice is offered either for satisfaction, impetration, or in thanksgiving for benefits received. Consider how this most Divine Sacrifice has all these conditions in an eminently more perfect degree than all other sacrifices, for it is infinitely more satisfactory than any other on account of the infinite value of the gift offered. Ponder how much thou owest to God on account of thy sins, and how poor and powerless thou art to satisfy for them; and how Christ, moved by His immense charity, has resolved to give His Blood in this sacrifice to pay thy debts and atone for them and for those of all the world, for its value is infinite. Behold how bound thou art to serve Him eternally. This sacri-

fice is likewise impetratory, because no one can better incline the heart of God to mercy towards men than His own Son, and thus thou hast no more efficacious means of obtaining favours from His hand than by offering to Him this most holy and agreeable sacrifice ; for as St. Paul says, He Who has given us His Son, how can He refuse us what we ask for in His name and by His merits !

Fourth Point.—Consider the delight with which the Eternal Father accepts this sacrifice, and what rejoicing it occasions in the heavenly court ; how the angels descend to assist the priest at the altar whilst he offers it, and to carry it and present it to the Eternal Father on the sublime altar of glory. Consider the esteem, awe, and reverence with which it is gazed on, adored, and venerated by the angelic spirits and all the celestial court ; and if it has been revealed to us that some saints have been received in heaven with indescribable rejoicings, what must not be the jubilation with which this Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is welcomed when He enters the court of His Father ? And thus St. Thomas says that this offering of Christ is called the Mass from the Latin *a mittendo*, because the Eternal Father sends Him to us to be our Redeemer, and we offer Him back again by the hands of the priest as a sacrifice of praise, in satisfaction for our sins, and to implore fresh graces. From all which thou shouldst draw for the profit of thy soul, first, with what devotion, attention, and reverence thou shouldst assist at the Holy Mass in the company of the heavenly courtiers. Secondly, how thou shouldst hear it, offering this Divine Sacrifice to the Eternal Father together with the priest, for the living and the dead, and especially for the necessities of the Church, for the welfare of all, and thine own in particular, and for all those who have been recommended to thy prayers. Thirdly, how thou shouldst prepare thyself to receive Holy Communion worthily, and with what gratitude, humility, and respect thou shouldst comport thyself afterwards, and what thanks thou shouldst render, in imitation of the angels of heaven.

Entreat the Lord to grant thee grace for all this, and He will bestow it on thee, and will instruct thee therein as the Master and Father of thy soul.

SIXTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE PRINCIPAL VIRTUES TAUGHT US BY CHRIST IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

Meditate to-day the virtues which Christ manifests and teaches in this Holy Sacrament, which is a compendium of all the wonders that He wrought in His mortal life. Ponder them one by one for thy profit.

The first is obedience, both to His Eternal Father who sends Him, and to the priest whose voice He obeys most punctually, coming at once when he pronounces the words at that time and place, without delay of any kind, God obeying thus the voice of man, and in a thing so arduous as to come down to be sacrificed in the Host for mankind. Isaac once ascended the mountain with his father to be sacrificed, without knowing for what purpose, and this obedience was esteemed so great that we are never tired of admiring and extolling it, and no reward appears excessive for such high merit. What then must be the merit of the obedience of Christ in this sacrifice, Who comes down from heaven at the voice of a priest, however bad he be, and places Himself voluntarily in his hands in order to be sacrificed, knowing and understanding for what purpose He comes, with extreme promptitude and alacrity, and this not once, but numberless times each day in all parts of the world where Mass is said. Verily words fail to extol it, and therefore is it left to the contemplation of the faithful. Meditate on this obedience, and learn to obey thy Creator and Lord.

The second virtue that Christ here teaches is the

charity and love He bears towards men, coming down to die mystically for them, without having any need of them, but solely for their good, as we have seen in the preceding meditations with St. Paul. And He carried the delicacy of this love to so high a degree that He laid down His life, and daily offers it, not for His friends alone, but likewise for His enemies, which is the proof of most perfect charity, and this that thou shouldst learn to do good, not only to thy friends, but likewise to the enemies who offend and injure thee.

The third virtue is mercy, shedding His blood liberally for all without distinction, and succouring the needs of all with sublime pity, and with as much delight for each one as He shed it for all on the altar of the cross.

The fourth virtue is humility, hiding His greatness beneath the veil of the sacramental species, and dwelling in the poor abodes of sinners, because they could not receive Him corporally if He came to them in the form He had whilst on earth. The Saviour Himself deigned to manifest this to a holy monk by changing the Host on the paten into a lovely infant, and again hiding Himself beneath the appearance of bread in order that he might receive Him.

The fifth virtue is meekness and patience in the midst of the insults He endures from heretics as well as from bad priests and sinners, who receive Him unworthily and treat Him with contempt. And although He could most easily punish them, and avenge the injuries done Him, yet He suffers them silently with admirable patience, in order to give thee an example of that which thou shouldst exhibit when wronged.

The sixth virtue taught us is peace, concord, and brotherly love towards all, without any distinction and avoiding all dissensions; for Christ unites Himself intimately with those that receive Him, in order that all may be one in Him, and be bound together with the bond of love and fraternal charity. For which reason, as St. Peter Damian tells us, the priest in the Mass turns round

and salutes the people, and the people return his salutation, in order to show that they are at peace with one another, and are united in the bond of fraternal charity, as this Holy Sacrament teaches us and requires of us. And St. Austin affirms that Christ chose to institute this sacrament beneath the appearance of bread and wine, because the former is made of many grains ground together, and the latter of the juice of many grapes pressed together, and both are thus symbolical, and teach us the union and charity which should unite us one with another, as Christ teaches us in this Sacrament.

The seventh is the virtue of perseverance, remaining in the sacramental species as long as they endure, never failing therein whatever may befall. Wherein He teaches us to persevere in virtue and in His holy service, in spite of whatever contradictions we may encounter, never drawing back one step from what we have undertaken.

These and many other virtues does Christ teach us in this Divine Sacrament, which thou should contemplate and meditate with gratitude to Him for having come down from heaven and having made a pulpit of the altar, in order to teach us the road to heaven. And with the humility of a disciple endeavour to learn of so great a Master, with the desire of imitating Him and the resolution of practising what He teaches thee for the welfare of thy soul.

SIXTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

TO SERVE AS PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

Although the preceding meditations can be made use of in order to prepare with fervour for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, and likewise for thanksgiving after having received, it seems fitting to add here the two following ones, drawn from what St. Luke tells us

about Zacheus in the 19th chapter of his Gospel, to serve especially as preparation before and thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

First Point.—Consider how, when Christ was passing through Jericho, Zacheus, who was a rich man, and the chief of the publicans, desired extremely to see and converse with Him, and sought most diligently to do so. In which he teaches thee the first disposition thou shouldst have in order to receive this Lord worthily into thy house, namely, the desire of receiving Him. For the bread that we eat when hungry does us good, wherefore thou shouldst enliven thy faith and knowledge of this Lord, and thereby thy appreciation of His person, and of the favour He does thee, and awaken in thy soul lively desires of receiving Him and of enjoying that favour.

Second Point.—Consider the efforts that Zacheus made, of which the first (he being short of stature) was to climb up a high tree in order to see Christ. This frondiferous tree, St. Ambrose tells us, is a type of the vanity and pride of this world, which is the root of so many vices, which it is needful we should trample under foot as Zacheus did, purifying our consciences from all sin in order to receive Christ. Zacheus was small of stature and wealthy, which teaches us that he who would receive Christ should be little by humility and rich in virtue. Here enter into thine own conscience and examine it carefully, cleansing it from all imperfection, watering it with tears of contrition, and adorning it with virtues, in order that it may become a worthy dwelling-place for the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the attention, delight, and devotion with which Zacheus gazed on Christ, without being disturbed by the great multitude of people that were assembled to see the Saviour, or prevented by his small height, all of which obstacles he overcame in order to see our Lord, and thereby he deserved that Christ should look on him and call him from amongst the crowd. Wherein thou hast instruction concerning what thou hast

to do before receiving Holy Communion, namely, to gaze on the Lord that thou desirest to receive with the eyes of meditation and contemplation, recollecting thyself in prayer without allowing thyself to be disturbed by the multitude of secular concerns nor by the society of men. Consider Who this Lord is Who is about to enter thy house, and who thou art that receivest Him. Ponder His greatness beside thy lowliness, and thine unworthiness in the presence of His majesty. Behold Him in heaven adored by the angels on the throne of His greatness, and see the narrowness of thy humble abode so unworthy of so great a Lord. Entreat Him to prepare thee by His grace, and to send the angels who have charge of His household, that they may adorn and decorate thy poor dwelling in such manner as to render it a fit abode for Him to enter.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ, “looking up,” saw Zacheus, and called him, commanding him to come down quickly, because He wished to enter into his house, and Zacheus obeyed the word of the Lord, and descended in haste and received Him into his house. Wherein thou hast further instruction how to prepare to receive Him into thine, namely, by showing obedience and diligence in His service, enkindling thy fervour, and not approaching to receive Him except in obedience to His will, manifested to thee through thy spiritual director. Weep over thy tepidity, and beg of God our Lord to grant thee the fervour of spirit and the burning love with which the greatest saints have received Him here on earth, and with which they love, adore, and worship Him in heaven; and approach with awe and reverence to receive Him under thy poor roof, acknowledging how unworthy thou art of so great a favour.

*SEVENTIETH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

TO SERVE AS THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Zacheus received the Redeemer into his house, “gaudens,” with intense joy and delight at beholding therein the Saviour of the world, and having the opportunity of serving and honouring Him Whom he held himself unworthy to gaze on. This is the first thing thou shouldst do after communicating, to rejoice with the Lord, and to make good use of the time during which He remains within thy house; behold Him glorious, accompanied by the angels and seraphim, courted and praised by all the celestial court, and rejoice to see so great a Lord in thy poor abode.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Zacheus remained standing with extreme reverence in the presence of the Saviour, giving thanks for the favour He had done him, and offering himself to His service. Thou shouldst do the like, prostrating thyself at His feet, giving thanks to Him for having deigned to enter under thy roof, entreating Him to confer fresh graces upon thee, offering Him the gratitude and praises of the heavenly court and of all creatures, and desiring to have countless tongues wherewith to praise and bless Him eternally.

Third Point.—Zacheus rendered account of his manner of life to the Lord, and it is probable that it was not a mere relation of his occupations, but that he took counsel with Him, and asked for guidance and grace in order to direct his steps towards heaven. Thou shouldst do the very same, exposing to Christ all thy actions, desires, and intentions, asking for light to direct thy life aright, and for grace to execute His will, and not to depart in the least thing therefrom. Show Him all thy wounds as to

the Physician of thy soul, and beseech Him to cure them : acknowledge thy faults to Him as to thy Judge, and entreat Him to pardon thee. Declare thy needs to Him as to thy King, and implore Him to succour thee. Present thyself before Him as the lost sheep that seeks its shepherd. Weep over thy past errors, and beseech Him to carry thee to His fold, and to receive thee back into His flock. Gaze on His wounds, and caress them, giving Him thanks for all that He has suffered for thee, and implore Him to shelter thee within them, where thou wilt find security, sweetness, strength, courage, and devotion.

Fourth Point.—Consider those words of Christ, “This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham ;” in which the Saviour manifests that He had done Zacheus honour because he was a son of Abraham, and to his house because of his merits. For God confers favours on many through those who devoutly receive Him into their souls : wherein thou art tacitly taught to ask favours for thy household. Be not backward in asking whilst Christ is thy guest ; open thy lips, and beg of Him to grant favours to thee, to all thy belongings, and to all who have been recommended to thy care. Pray for the necessities of the Church, and for the sins of the whole world ; pray for the faithful and the unfaithful ; and as Christ said that He was come to save what was lost, beseech Him not to forget thee, and to bring back to His service all those who have strayed therefrom ; and since thou dost not deserve to be heard, entreat Him at least to be moved, by the merits of thy spiritual Fathers, and of the Blessed Virgin, and all the saints, to grant thee what thou dost solicit :

*SEVENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Third Sunday after Pentecost.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XV.)

The Gospel relates how the publicans and sinners coming to hear the teaching of Christ, the Scribes and Pharisees murmured thereat; and Christ repelled their attacks by the parable of the shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep in the desert in order to seek one that was lost; and with that of the woman who had many groats, and yet sought for and found with joy one that she had lost; and He wound up by saying, "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."

First Point.—Meditate with St. Ambrose the fervour of the publicans and sinners in hearkening to the word of God, and how they abandoned their gains and the worldly business they had on hand in order to come to Christ, preferring heavenly concerns to earthly ones, and those of the soul before those of the body. Draw from this consideration to do the like thyself, and not to allow thyself to be prevented by the occupations of this world from coming to Christ, but to employ thyself in amassing spiritual wealth, and in the welfare of thy soul, preferring always heavenly to earthly concerns, and what is eternal to what is perishable and unenduring.

Second Point.—Consider the benignity with which the Saviour welcomed sinners; for He not only taught them, listened to their doubts, and showed them the way to heaven, but He also entered into their houses, and sat at their tables, and eat with them, which is the extreme of kindness and friendliness, and the greatest proof of affection that He could give them. Praise and extol the bounty and mercy of the Saviour, and the humility with which He welcomes the guilty; and do not thou despise any one as a sinner, for, as thou seest, the Redeemer

seeks such, and esteems them when they approach Him and are converted. Excite in thyself great confidence in the Divine compassion, that He will welcome thee if thou approachest Him with a contrite heart, as He did the sinners of that time. Cry out and entreat Him to admit thee into His school, to pardon thy sins, and to direct thee on the road to heaven.

Third Point.—Consider how the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against the Lord because He received sinners and eat with them, and also against those that approached Him. Ponder how mistaken are the judgments of men, and how little they should be heeded, since they condemn as evil the mercy of God and the repentance of sinners. Raise thine eyes to heaven and note what is the judgment of God, which is the true criterion that appreciates each thing at its real value. Implore His grace not to be hasty in thy judgments, and entreat Him to put a curb on thy tongue that thou mayst not find fault with any one, least of all with those who draw near to Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ came forward to protect sinners against those who censured them, defending them with powerful reasoning, and avenging the honour of God ; whence thou shouldst learn two things : First, great confidence in the Lord, which should determine thee to serve Him, and to rely on Him to defend thee from all thine enemies, as He defended the publicans who approached Him. Secondly, great courage to take up the defence of God's cause and that of His flock, whenever needful, against all who oppose them. Acquire strength and energy from the knowledge of His benignity ; entreat His grace to be successful in His service. He will grant it thee, and thou wilt experience His protection.

SEVENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE LOST SHEEP.

First Point.—The blessed St. Gregory says that the lost sheep is man, who lost heaven by sin; the ninety-nine sheep are the choirs of angels, who had no need of penance; the Shepherd is Christ, Who came down into the desert of this world to seek man and to bring him back to the fold of heaven. Wherein ponder, first, the immense compassion of God, Who, having no need of thee for anything whatsoever, left the heavens and came down to earth, submitted Himself to so many inconveniences, and endured so many labours in order to reclaim thee and restore to thee thy right to His glory. Cry out and say, with all the affection of thy heart, “Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for such great mercy; may the angels and all creatures praise Thee for the pity Thou hast manifested towards me, so unworthy thereof; grant me grace to be grateful for so great a favour.” Lay stress on the consideration of the obligation under which thou art thus placed, and ponder deliberately what thy duty is, and how and in what thou canst serve the Lord.

Second Point.—Consider the dangers incurred by a sheep which leaves the fold, abandons its shepherd, and wanders astray into the desert, exposed at each step to become the prey of wild beasts who would tear it to pieces, of falling down precipices, or of losing its life by drowning; and then turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider the dangers into which thou dost fall when thou separatest thyself from God and forsakest the fold of the just, how thou then wanderest astray and without guide, at the risk of falling at each step down a thousand precipices, or into the power of the infernal wolves, because of the many sins thou dost commit. Open thine eyes, and resolve forthwith to endure countless trials, in-

conveniences, mortifications, affronts, poverty, and scorn, and all the afflictions in the world, rather than forsake God. Entreat Him not to abandon thee, nor to withdraw His countenance from thee, nor to permit thee to wander one step from His fold, and away from those who abide under His protection and in His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider the Good Shepherd, who goes into the desert to seek the lost sheep at the cost of fatigue, exposure to the sun and the wind, enduring fatigues and sweats, all of which he considers to have been well endured when he finds the sheep; and taking it up with joy, he places it on his shoulder and brings it back rejoicing, the weight thereof being pleasurable to him, and the labour sweet, because he has found the sheep. Then consider the care that Christ our Lord has of seeking thee; behold what great fatigues thou hast cost Him; how many times thou hast escaped from His pursuit when He was following thee; what journeys, toils, and thorns He has endured, and how much blood He has shed for thee; and then with what delight of His soul did He find thee in the desert, and place thee on His shoulder to bring thee back to the fold, to that chosen fold of the angels of heaven. Reflect on thyself, and weep over the labour thou hast occasioned this Lord, and come in search of Him in order that He may have to seek thee no more. He bore His cross on one shoulder and the lost sheep on both, for thou hast cost Him greater fatigue than His cross, and He feels more acutely the loss of one soul that separates itself from Him by sin than all the sufferings He endured in His body during the Passion. Afflict Him no longer by thy sins; return to His flock; weep, bemoan, and ask pardon of Him for all thy past life, and solicit grace never more to sin.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who does penance, than for ninety-nine just who have no need of penance. Behold how God values a sinner who repents, and give

this joy to God and to His angels, first, by doing penance for thine own sins ; and, secondly, by seeking sinners and bringing them back to the fold of the Lord at the cost of whatever labour, bearing all things joyfully in order to draw souls to God and reclaim them from the mire of their vices. Contemplate the Good Shepherd traversing rugged roads and rocks, deserts and forests, over thorns and brambles, in search of the lost sheep. Compassionate Him, and assist Him to seek for it. Let Him not go alone ; journey with Him ; leave thy comforts for the sake of the welfare of thy brethren ; and not only leave, as Christ did, the ninety-nine for the sake of one, but leave one for the sake of the ninety-nine that thou mayst draw to His service ; for certainly the number of lost sinners is greater than that of the just who serve Him. Remember all thou owest to the angels, and repay them by this service, causing them as many days of rejoicing as thou dost bring back sinners to God.

SEVENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE LOST GROAT.

First Point.—What woman, says Christ, possessing ten coins, would not, if she loses one, seek it until it be found ? In which thou shouldst ponder how God values souls, and thine in particular, since He compares it to a precious coin, which is what men most highly esteem ; and the Saviour so valued it that He purchased it at the cost of His blood. Consider how little thou dost value thy soul, which thou dost sell to the devil at the vile price of some petty interest of pleasure or vainglory, which vanishes in a breath. Bewail thine errors in the presence of God, and most firmly purpose to die a thou-

sand deaths rather than to forfeit so precious a jewel as thy soul.

Second Point.—Observe the endeavours of this woman in order to find the lost coin—namely, she lit a candle, swept her house, and sought it diligently and perseveringly until she found it. Such are the means thou shouldst make use of in order to recover lost grace and therewith thy soul:—First, lighting the torch of consideration, and examining all the corners of thy conscience, scrutinising thy past life, acknowledging and weeping over thy sins. Secondly, sweeping them away by confession, leaving none behind that can stain thy soul. Thirdly, making haste to do good in satisfaction for the sins thou hast committed, in order by penance to render God propitious to thee. Set the seal to thy repentance by perseverance, ceasing not nor wearying until thou hast found the coin thou hadst lost, and hast adorned thy soul therewith. Ponder all this in the presence of the Lord, and solicit His grace in order to accomplish it, and to serve Him persistently to the end.

Third Point.—Consider the delight of the woman when she had found her lost treasure, which was so great that, not able to contain it within her own breast, she gave tidings thereof to her neighbours and relations. Ponder the joy a soul experiences when it escapes from sin and from eternal damnation and finds the precious pearl of grace, recovering thereby its right to the inheritance of heaven. Behold what joy a man condemned to death feels when his sentence is condoned and he recovers the life he had forfeited; and placing thy hand on thy breast, consider how, by sin, thou hast lost the grace of God, and art condemned to hell to endure eternal death; and that by repentance all this is reversed and thou recoverest thy right to the inheritance of glory, whereat thy soul should experience most intense delight. Draw hence high appreciation of grace and a most firm purpose of seeking it

and preserving it, at whatever cost of labours and fatigues, for no price can equal its value.

Fourth Point.—Consider how far the angels are from being envious, since they rejoice and make jubilee in heaven on account of the welfare of man, not because of temporal advantage, for of this they make no account, but because of the spiritual good of souls, which they further with all their power, assisting us, guarding us, succouring us, counselling us, and praying to God for us, and lastly, celebrating with jubilee our welfare. Take a lesson from them, and envy not the good of thy neighbours, but rather in all charity strive with all thy strength to assist them, especially in order to arise from sin, and rejoice with their joys, giving thanks to God for them.

SEVENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD AND THE FACILITY WITH WHICH HE FORGIVES SIN.

First Point.—Add to the foregoing meditations this one to serve as an epilogue and recapitulation of the previous ones, and consider first the inclination that God has to forgive sins and to do good to sinners, wherein shine forth His infinite pity and mercy ; for at all times and on all occasions when they turn to Him He pardons them with delight, receives them back into His favour, and makes them heirs of His kingdom. At whatever hour, He says, by the mouth of Ezechiel, a sinner weeps, I will so forget his wickedness as to remember it no more for ever. Ponder the infinite mercy of God, since even were the offences of the sinner more numerous than the grains of sand on the shore, and of greater magnitude than the highest mountains of the earth, yet as soon as he weeps with true contrition for having committed them, God at

once pardons and forgets them, and receives him back to His grace and friendship. O bountiful God, infinitely pitiful and merciful! blessed be Thy pity for all ages without end! Derive hence deep affections of confidence in God for obtaining the pardon of thy sins, and at the same time learn to forgive the injuries done thee, as God pardons those thou committest against Him.

Second Point.—Consider that God not only pardons easily those who, like Magdalen and the Prodigal Son, come to ask His forgiveness, but His mercy extends yet further, and goes forward to seek sinners, soliciting them with His grace and pardon, as He sought Matthew the publican, and Zacheus, and others of whom the Gospel tells us, whom He forgave and did favours to, and of whom the lost sheep sought by the shepherd and brought back on his shoulders is the type. Entreat the Lord to show the like pity towards thee, to seek thee and bring thee back to the fold whenever thou dost stray therefrom, and that as He has so great an inclination to pardon sinners, He will receive thee to His favour, now that thou approachest the door of His clemency. Cast thyself at His feet like Mary Magdalen, and beseech Him, as she did, with tears to pardon thy sins, and thou wilt obtain forgiveness from the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider what God requires from the sinner in order to forgive him, which is no more than a heartfelt “I have sinned!”—that is, repentance for the past, with the determination to amend in the future, and then, without further delay, the Lord forgives him. Put before thine eyes the example of David, who repented of his sin when admonished by the Prophet Nathan, and said, “I have sinned against the Lord;” and the prophet at once replied, “God has already pardoned thee.” As St. John Chrysostom observes, there was no interval between the repentance and the pardon, or between his avowal that he had sinned and the exercise of God’s mercy. Blessed for ever be that mercy! Amen. Truly the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins is a jewel of

so great value, that if we were required to perform all the penances, mortifications, pilgrimages, and punishments that can be imagined, we ought to accomplish them joyfully in order to secure it; how much more therefore should we willingly do what little is required of us in order to purchase so rich a jewel at so low a price. Give many thanks to God for having rendered the recovery of lost grace so easy to us, and for the facility with which He opens to us the doors of His mercy, and grants us the pardon of our sins. Weep over the negligence of men in seeking it, and since thou seest the door open, enter therein, and fail not to obtain the pardon of thy offences and grace for thy soul. Weep to think how diligently thou dost seek for earthly advantages, and how slow thou art to secure heavenly goods.

Fourth Point.—Consider that God not only forgives sins with the facility we have noticed above, but He at the same time bestows great favours on those who heartily repent; and besides admitting them to His friendship and making them heirs of heaven, He confers other favours upon them, as He did on St. Matthew, numbering him amongst His apostles, and to St. Mary Magdalen, lodging in her house, recalling to life her brother Lazarus when already four days dead, defending her against the murmurings of the Pharisees, &c. So completely does God forget the sins of penitent sinners, that He remembers them no more than if they had never been committed, and He considers repentant sinners to be His friends, and treats them as such. Let thy heart take courage from this liberality, and draw hence a firm resolution to love and serve so good a Lord, and to do good to those who injure thee.

*SEVENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE INFINITE PERFECTION OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider how Christ our Redeemer commands us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Wherefore it is needful to contemplate and meditate the infinite perfection of God, and aspire to imitate it in all things, as far as we are able, with the assistance of His divine grace. Consider, then, first, how God is most perfect in Himself, there being no perfection in which He is or can be wanting, neither can there be any imperfection in Him, and this of Himself, and because of His infinite goodness, which He receives from none other, neither does He depend on another for its preservation in all its sublime elevation, which far exceeds anything that we can conceive. Contemplate this abyss of infinite bounty, this wide field of boundless extent, this light inaccessible, and marvel and rejoice that God is what He is. Draw hence tender affections of love and praise, and a desire to preserve thy soul and all thine actions from the smallest stain of defect, and to perform all thy works with the utmost possible perfection, in order to imitate as far as thou canst the sublime perfection of God.

Second Point.—Consider how all the perfections of creatures exist in God in the highest degree, without number or limit; for all that exists in God is God, infinite and incomprehensible as His own being; and not only does He embrace within Himself the perfection of all creatures, but all of them receive whatever perfection they possess from Him. Contemplate that immeasurable, most profound, and inexhaustible ocean of divine perfections, whence flow like streams and arise as vapours all the perfections, beauty, greatness, intelligence, wisdom, power, bounty, liberality, &c., which are distributed

amongst all creatures, all of which together are no more than as a drop in comparison with the ocean of God's perfection. Rapt with admiration at His immense goodness and perfection, cease not from praising Him ; and at the same time entreat Him, as He fills all things, not to leave thee alone empty, but to communicate to thee some share of His immense goodness and exalted perfection.

Third Point.—Consider in particular the various perfections, both corporal and spiritual, possessed by creatures. Contemplate the beauty of the sun, the moon, and the stars ; the magnitude of the heavens, the transparency of the air and of the water ; the order of the universe, the beauty and fragrance of flowers, the fecundity of trees and animals, the intelligence of man, the wisdom and perfection of the angels, and whatever goodness is to be found in created things. Arise thence to the contemplation of the perfection of the Most High ; imagine an aggregate assemblage of all these and other infinite perfections, and yet thou wilt not arrive at comprehending the extent of the perfection of God. Humble thyself with the angels before His throne, acknowledging thyself to be no greater than an ant, less than a little fly, and a most vile thing in comparison with Him ; and then see how thou hast dared to offend Him, and how far thou art from loving Him and serving Him as thou shouldst. Abase thyself in His presence with these thoughts, marvelling at His greatness, at His goodness and patience, that He should permit thee, so vile a worm, to love and to serve Him ; and that He, being so infinitely exalted above thee, should yet exhort thee to imitate Him.

Fourth Point.—Having considered all this, and how God embraces all possible perfections in Himself, without the smallest taint of imperfection, turn thine eyes on the folly of man ; weep over his blindness and thine own, that, neglecting the supreme good, they should descend to creatures who are so imperfect, and that,

carried away by a phantom of delight and beauty, they should abandon the real and supreme perfection of the omnipotent God. Bewail thy blindness, ask pardon for thy error, and say, with St. Austin, "Deus meus et omnia,"—Thou art my God and my all; in Thee I possess all things in the utmost perfection. My soul desires nothing but Thee; hold me by the hand in order that I may not be blinded or deceived by the world, or by aught that glitters therein. Give light, O Lord, to all men, in order that they may know Thee, seek Thee, and despise all earthly things for Thy sake.

SEVENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE INFINITE GOODNESS AND SANCTITY OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider that God is infinitely good and holy, because He unites in Himself all virtues, all goodness and sanctity, in the highest degree, and in the most exalted perfection imaginable; and this goodness and holiness He receives from none other than His own Being, which is infinite, incomprehensible, and eternal, having no beginning; for He always was, He is, and He will be for ever. Contemplate this supreme goodness and most perfect sanctity, which can never admit of any sin, stain, or imperfection; wherefore Christ said,¹ "None is good but One, that is, God;" and the Church daily repeats it, saying, "Thou alone art holy," because He alone possesses holiness of Himself, and in an eminent degree, whilst that of all others is derived from Him. Admire this infinite goodness, and unite thy voice with those of the seraphim to bless and praise Him, saying, "Holy, holy, holy!" rejoicing that He is holy for all ages without end.

¹ Mark x. 18.

Second Point.—In order the better to appreciate this infinite goodness of God, descend to the contemplation of creatures, and ponder how all the goodness they possess is derived from that fountain and ocean of infinite sanctity, and that all their perfections and goodness, whether of the natural, of the moral, or of the supernatural order, are as nought in comparison with the perfection of God, and less than a grain of sand in regard of the universe, mixed as they are with the dross of so many imperfections, blemishes, and sins. Blush to perceive how often thou hast abandoned God, the supreme and infinite good, for His creatures, so imperfect, and fit only to be trodden under foot, of which the best are most vile in comparison with Him; and beg pardon with a most firm determination not to allow thyself to be deceived henceforth, but to despise all creatures, all for His love.

Third Point.—Consider how this infinite goodness of God is not liable to variation or decrease, as is that of His creatures, but is immutable and enduring, without diminution or end. The angels, although so holy, are capable of change, as holy Job affirms; and if God withdrew His supporting arm from them, they might forfeit their holiness; and much more is this true of men, as we daily witness; but with God holiness is a part of His very essence, and as He can neither fail nor change, so neither can His goodness be subject to variation. Draw hence the esteem that thou shouldst have of the goodness and holiness of God, and a firm resolution to love and serve Him, relying not on fickle creatures, but on His goodness as on an immovable foundation, endeavouring to imitate the divine sanctity by perseverance in good without change or diminution, aspiring to be holy and perfect, and taking for thy standard the holiness and sanctity of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider the infinite purity and sanctity of God, and how it manifests itself in all His works, in which shine forth those two sorts of holiness and justice

of which David speaks when he says,¹ "Decline from evil, and do good;" for God never ceases to do good, nor is His holiness inactive, and He does all things with the utmost perfection, never declining towards any evil whatever, nor suffering any blemish of imperfection, but always doing good. Oh, my soul! that thou didst learn from such a Master, and wouldst see thyself in this mirror, not suffering virtue to lie dormant within thee, but exercising it in the service of God, and this always well and perfectly, flying from all sin and imperfection more than from death itself.

SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

HOW GOD IS WORTHY OF LOVE IN HIMSELF AND LIKEWISE
BECAUSE OF HIS BENEFITS.

First Point.—Consider that if what is good deserves love, because, as Aristotle teaches, goodness captivates the will, God, being infinitely good, as has been said, is likewise infinitely amiable, and He alone can love as He deserves to be loved, and all our love falls short of His desert. Consider how wanting thou hast been in love of Him, and how far thou art from corresponding with thy will to what He deserves from thee, occupying thyself with creatures, and neglecting the Creator. The reason of this is that thou dost not gaze on Him, or contemplate, or know Him as thou shouldst, occupied as thou art with visible and transitory things. Blush to have abandoned the supreme good for the sake of this vile world, and raising thine eyes from earth to contemplate the infinite sanctity of God, solicit light to know Him, and the fire of divine love wherewith to love Him.

Second Point.—Consider how He is loved by the angels and archangels, by the cherubim and seraphim, inflamed

¹ Ps. xxxvi.

with His love as iron in the furnace is penetrated with fire. Ponder how He is loved by the saints in heaven, who know Him by the clear vision of His essence and goodness; what ineffable delight they experience in loving Him, and how far they are from being preoccupied with creatures, their hearts and souls being wholly wrapt up in their Creator. Entreat them to teach thee to love Him, and to give thee one spark of that fire with which they burn, in order to enkindle and consume thy heart in His love, and to purify it from all dross of affection for creatures. And beseech the Lord Himself to enlighten thee with the light of His knowledge, and to render thee worthy of His Divine love.

Third Point.—In order to inflame thy heart with the love of God, consider, first, how much He loves thee, and as love can only be repaid by love, how great is that which thou owest in return for such immense charity; and, secondly, that His love for man is not that of goodwill only, but that He constantly manifests it in His works, communicating Himself to all. Contemplate the goodness and beauty which are possessed by creatures, and which God communicates to them for thy sake; and then consider how He communicates Himself to men, and especially to thee, since, besides the innumerable benefits that thou receivest continually from His hand, both for thy body and thy soul, He so loved thee as to give His own Son for thy redemption. Ponder how this Son communicates to thee His Soul, His Body, His Blood, and His Divinity, in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, and leaves no stone unturned in order to secure thy welfare and salvation, till at last He communicates Himself to thee in heaven by the beatific vision, giving thee the possession of His very essence, and therein the sovereign good which contains all good, and making man like unto Himself. O Divine Lord! what can I render Thee for so many and such great benefits? With what love can I love Thee for such supreme love? In what manner can I give my whole self to Thee in return for such great

mercies? I confess my poverty, I bewail my impotence, that I cannot succeed in loving and serving Thee as I ought. I offer Thee the love that the angels bear Thee, and that wherewith Thou lovest Thyself, to supply what my poverty lacks.

Fourth Point.—Consider the tenderness with which God loves thee and does good to thee, namely, for no interest or profit of His own, but only for thine, seeking thy welfare in all His works. Whence thou shouldst draw affections of tenderest charity, loving and serving God with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, for His honour and glory, without ever regarding thine own interest, and if need be, sacrificing thy honour and life and all thou dost possess for His love, and in order that He may be honoured and glorified by all. Prostrate thyself at His feet, and offer thyself disinterestedly to His service, beseeching Him from thy heart to give thee His grace in order that thou mayst love and serve Him as thou shouldst.

SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Fourth Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE V.)

St. Luke tells us that a great multitude being assembled to hear the teaching of our Saviour, He went into the bark of St. Peter and preached to them, and afterwards He sailed away with the disciples, who letting down their nets at His bidding, caught a great number of fishes, whereat they greatly marvelled, and St. Peter casting himself at the Saviour's feet acknowledged himself to be a sinful man, but Christ raised him up and comforted him; and the disciples, leaving all things, followed Christ.

First Point.—Consider the thirst and fervour of that crowd in coming to hear the word of God; for they

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followed our Lord, not only on land, but by water, and in all places, leaving their homes and their families, regardless of inconvenience, that they might receive from His lips the solid and substantial food of their souls. Learn from these men to seek nourishment for thine, and witnessing their example, blush in the presence of God to behold how little thou dost thirst for the good of thy soul, and how much for that of thy body; with what facility thou dost neglect the former, and with what eagerness thou dost seek the latter, and beg of God grace to amend.

Second Point.—Consider the generous benignity with which the Saviour received and fed those who came to Him; for both on land and at sea and in all places He preached to them, taught them, and distributed to them heavenly food. Ponder what thirst and longing He had for the welfare of their souls, and entreat Him to have the like for thine. Go with all confidence to His school; He will teach thee the road to heaven, if thou wilt but learn it; and let his example teach thee never to deny thy assistance to thy neighbours in anything, but on the contrary to succour them on all occasions, and to spare no labour or care when needful for the welfare of their souls.

Third Point.—Consider how, having preached to the crowd, Christ set sail with His disciples, launched out into the deep and commanded them to cast their nets, and they drew out a very great quantity of fish. Wherein thou hast much to ponder; first, that Christ instructed the multitude from the borders of the lake, but His disciples on the high sea. Because, as St. Gregory says, spiritual persons require other food than that fitted for the generality, and thus Christ withdraws to the high sea with His disciples in order to give them higher teaching and more exalted instructions. Entreat the Lord to instruct thee according to thy capacity, and to give thee light and discretion when called upon to teach others, in order that thou mayst give nourishment to each according

to his wants. Secondly, ponder how He commanded them to cast their nets, teaching them that He required them to catch not fishes but men, as He afterwards explained to them. For the same work has He chosen thee; see whether thou fulfillest His holy will, and whether thou dost occupy thyself in winning thy brethren, or only in thy own temporal welfare and advancement. Open the eyes of thy soul. Consider further that Christ commanded the disciples to cast their net to the right of the ship, and by that means they secured so copious a draught. The right hand represents spiritual wealth and riches; the left hand, earthly ones. Observe on which side thou hast cast thy net until now, whether thou hast obeyed the injunction of Christ, and what has been the result of all thy labours, and thou wilt find that it has been nought, for all is vanity. Bewail thy past errors, and the loss thou hast sustained. Draw light from the teaching of Christ, cast thy net henceforth to the right hand, bestowing all thy care on what is for the service of God, and on spiritual concerns, and thou wilt secure a very copious draught of immortal treasures.

Fourth Point.—Consider the humility of St. Peter, for when most successful, and when deriving the greatest fruit from his labours, he did not attribute it to his own exertions, but to the grace of the Lord; and when most rich then was he most humble, throwing himself at the feet of Christ, and beseeching Him to withdraw from him because he was a great sinner. Oh, exalted virtue of the holy apostle! oh, heavenly lesson which teaches us not to be vain of the progress we make in virtue, and which we see ourselves to have achieved, but rather to humble ourselves the more, as the trees when most laden with fruit bend down to the earth. Enter into account with thyself, and behold the vanity of thy heart, how self-complacent and puffed-up thou art at the least good thou dost, as if it were the work of thine own strength and not of the power of God. Learn to humble thyself, as thou hast so much cause for doing; cast thyself with St. Peter

at the feet of Christ, and say to Him, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am the most vile sinner in the world. Depart from me, lest the odour of my sins offend Thee, or the contagion thereof touch Thee; depart from me, for I merit not to be near Thee. But no; depart not, lest I be entirely lost; rather, as my Sovereign Physician, draw near to me, who am so infirm, to heal my wounds, and have mercy upon me. Approach me and cure my ills, for I am the greatest of sinners, and Thou camest down from heaven to seek sinners. Have mercy on me; have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy!"

SEVENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider how, when the crowd came to hear the word of God, Christ went up into the ship of Peter and thence taught the multitude. He might easily have taught them from the shore, or have gone into another bark, but He chose that of Peter, because it was from that vessel that He was to give Catholic and true doctrine to the world. Render great thanks to God for this favour that He has done us; behold Him preaching and teaching from that boat, and derive from this discourse a high appreciation of the bark of Peter, and of the doctrine that Christ ever teaches us from it through the sovereign Pontiffs, successors of St. Peter, and by means of the doctors, preachers, confessors, and spiritual Fathers, who have the spirit of St. Peter. Be convinced in the presence of God that He teaches thee by their voice, and henceforth accept their words as though spoken by the Lord. Implore His grace to value them as such, and to put them in practice.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Christ besought Peter to draw back a little from the land

that He might preach ; in which thou hast to ponder two things : first, that He besought him—and the Evangelist does not say that He commanded him, although, as his superior, He might have done so—thus teaching us to be meek and humble in our words and manner of speaking, and instructing thee how thou shouldst behave towards thy inferiors, if thou be a superior, and still more towards thy equals, when thou hast to require something from them ; secondly, that whereas preachers always desire to have their audience near to them, Christ sought to withdraw from His and from the earth, in order to teach us that, to produce fruit amongst men, it is needful to withdraw from familiarity with them, and not to associate overmuch with them, and still less with earthly concerns, but rather to retire from the things of earth, to launch out into the deep and sublime things of heaven, and to seek familiar intercourse with God. O my soul ! that thou didst learn this lesson, and didst know how to set aside all that is earthly, and to fix thy mind on what is heavenly and divine ; how greatly would it profit thee and thy neighbour ! Implore this grace from God, and desist not from thy petition until thou hast obtained it from the Lord ; thereby wilt thou secure a priceless store of virtue.

Third Point.—Consider how the disciples laboured all night alone and caught nothing, but in the daytime, and when in company with Christ, they caught so great a draught that it made up for all they had lost before ; and this in order to teach us that it is lost labour for us to cast our net alone, and during the night of sin, for nothing is caught ; but if we cast it when in company with Christ, and during the day, and clear light of His grace, we labour successfully, and great fruit is secured. O my soul ! that thou wouldst learn this lesson in order to render thy labours profitable and to derive fruit therefrom. Harken to the words of St. Paul : What fruit hast thou derived from those past works which thou dost now acknowledge with shame ? What hast thou gained

by all thy past anxieties when in the darkness of sin? Turn over a new leaf, abandon darkness, and labour no longer in the night of sin. Beg light from God, associate thyself with the Redeemer, depart not from His side; carry Him always with thee, and at each casting of the net thou wilt, by His grace, achieve immense results. Cast thyself at His feet, like St. Peter; entreat Him to assist thee, to teach thee, and rather to annihilate than abandon thee or withdraw His protection from thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how St. Peter and the other disciples marvelled at beholding so copious a draught of fishes. Be thou also filled with wonder at the number of men whom, by the grace of God, they gathered throughout the whole world, drawing them out of the darkness in which they were plunged, and from the deep mire of their vices, bestowing the light of heaven on them, and subjecting them to grace. Beg of God not to be left in the mire of thy sins; beg to be drawn therefrom, and made one of the many who are journeying to heaven. O Lord! let me not be forgotten; ensnare me in Thy net, withdraw me from the immense ocean of my vices in which I am submerged; subject me to Thy protecting grace, and conduct me in Thy bark to the port of Thy glory.

EIGHTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST AND HIS MANNER OF
TEACHING.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke tells us that “*sitting* He (Christ) taught the multitudes out of the ship,” that is to say, leisurely and taking time, not hurriedly and hastily, as one who passes by. Draw hence a lesson how to instruct thy neighbours, not hastily but calmly, attending to their spiritual advancement with the

tenderness of true charity and desire of their profit, according to the example of Christ. Learn also, with regard to thine own soul, to occupy thyself leisurely and not hurriedly in the concerns of thy salvation and spiritual advancement. Consider how thou dost hurry over thy prayers, the Holy Mass, meditation, confession, communion, and all spiritual things, and how deliberately and slowly thou dost set about temporal, earthly, perishable, and worthless concerns. Bewail thy errors in the presence of God; beg pardon for them, and solicit grace to change thy conduct for the remainder of thy life.

Second Point.—Consider how the Gospel tells us that so many fishes were caught that the net broke. Wherein thou hast a lesson not to burden thyself with too many occupations, however good they may be, lest the net break and thou endanger whilst thyself assisting others. See and consider that well-ordained charity begins with one's self, and that thou dost not serve God by procuring the good of thy neighbour to thine own detriment. Ask prudence of God in order to employ thyself in works of charity, both spiritual and corporal, without causing injury to thine own soul; rather seek profit both to thy neighbour and to thyself.

Third Point.—Consider the wonder experienced by St. Peter and the other disciples at beholding so copious a draught of fishes, and how they all submitted themselves to Christ, and made the firm resolution of leaving father and mother, boats, nets, and all they possessed, and of following Him in poverty and nakedness. And blush before the throne of God to see how they submitted to Him at the first marvel that they saw Him perform, and thou dost not submit after so many that He has done and daily performs in thy sight. O Lord! how obstinate is my heart and how blind my eyes, that I never wholly submit to Thee, nor entirely break with the world, or renounce its honours, riches, and pleasures. Hold out Thy hand to withdraw me from its tyranny,

that I may despise and trample it under foot, and, like Thy disciples, may follow Thee poor and naked.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate how Christ teaches the world unceasingly from the vessel of His cross. Place before thyself the image of Christ crucified, and hearken to what He says to thee from that mainmast of the ship of St. Peter ; listen to the exhortations He addresses to thee of patience, of humility, of charity, of contempt of the world, of constancy, and of long-suffering in such a deluge of woes. And see how like a ship He himself ascends on the bitter waters that buffet Him, and goes out into the midst of the ocean of His sufferings. Contemplate what He suffers and how He suffers ; meditate on and slowly ponder His words, inscribe them on thy heart, and solicit grace and courage to put them into execution.

EIGHTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE DISCIPLES FISHING IN THE NAME AND BY THE
COMMAND OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider how the disciples, although such expert fishermen and so practically acquainted with that sea, laboured all night without any success, not catching a single fish ; but when they cast their net in obedience to Christ, they enclosed so large a number that they could not draw it in. This was in order to teach thee the power of obedience, and to convince thee that a single act performed at the command of a superior who holds the place of God, is of greater value than many performed out of self-will. Derive hence a very firm determination to be in all things directed by obedience to thy superior, be he who he may, and not by thy own will, and thou wilt secure great fruit from thy actions.

Second Point.—Consider how the disciples cast the net in the name of the Lord, saying, “We have laboured all the night and have taken nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net.” And with the name of Jesus on their lips they cast it into the sea, and took a great draught. Draw hence what purity of intention thou shouldst have in all thy actions, directing them to the glory of God, and commencing none but in His name and for His holy service, and confide in His strength for the success of all thy works.

Third Point.—Consider how, on beholding the great draught they had enclosed, they called to those in the other ship, who came and helped them, and they filled both ships with the fish that the Lord gave them. Wherein thou hast two heads of instruction for thy soul. The first condemns envy, and teaches brotherly love, bestowing on thy neighbour a share in thy successes, and availing thyself of his strength and industry for the service of God. The second is to assist others with love and charity when they need thy help, as on this occasion the disciples aided one another, and thus did God favour them all; and thou mayest expect the like from the Lord if thou dost imitate them.

Fourth Point.—Meditate the last words of Christ to St. Peter, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” Hearken, O my soul, to these words, as though addressed to thee by the mouth of the Saviour, and fear not to enter on whatever charge God may impose on thee, however exalted and difficult, for He will give thee grace and the talent necessary for its fulfilment. Fear not whilst Christ is at thy side, for He will carry thee in peace and safety through whatever enterprise thou mayest undertake at His command; lose not sight of Him and He will watch over thee; leave Him not and He will not abandon thee. Remember what occurred with Cæsar when the pilot who was conducting him across the sea, alarmed by the fury of the winds, grew afraid, and Cæsar encouraged him, saying,¹ “Ne timeas fortuna Cæsaris

¹ Plut. ejus vita.

tecum est,"—Fear not; thou bearest Cæsar and his fortunes. And what comparison is there between Cæsar and the Saviour? If the presence of Cæsar and of his good fortune comforted the pilot in well-known perils, how much more shouldst thou be encouraged by the presence of Christ and of His grace? Fear not; henceforth thou shalt catch men and draw them to God. Cast the net, as Christ enjoins; not the hook, as St. Bernard remarks, because therewith few are caught and that painfully; but with the net many are drawn in, and that so sweetly and gently that the fish imprisoned in the net are not aware of the fact until they are withdrawn from the water. Thus shouldst thou endeavour to draw men to God with all the sweetness, benignity, and meekness of Christ, by good doctrine and yet better example, and thou wilt catch a great draught. Meditate all this slowly; offer thyself to the Saviour for His service, and entreat His grace to persevere therein.

EIGHTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

First Point.—Consider in the fervour with which the crowd congregated to hear Christ and to profit by His doctrine the earnestness with which thou shouldst strive to advance in His service, according to thy state of life. Enter into account with thyself, and consider the means and opportunities afforded thee for progressing in His service, and how little fruit thou hast derived therefrom. Weep over thy tepidity, and beg of God to give thee His Holy Spirit in order that thou mayest serve Him with fervour.

Second Point.—Consider those words of Christ: "Duc in altum,"—"Launch out into the deep." Set sail, abandon

the earth, and take to the high sea. These words the Lord addresses to thee, admonishing thee to ascend to greater perfection, to arise from earthly passions, and from all that the world adores, and to ascend to the heights of the Spirit, and to the summit of perfection. Remain not always in the lowest class, but advance to higher things; break the bonds of worldly affections which prevent thee from progressing; extend the sails of thy heart to the favourable wind of the Holy Spirit; take courage to run to the summit of perfection, and to live with God and for God alone. Offer thyself forthwith courageously to what is most arduous and perfect. God will assist thee, and in a short time thou wilt advance much.

Third Point.—Meditate those words that the apostles addressed to Christ, “Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing;” and consider in what thou hast spent thy strength and labour; and how little thou hast profited in the service of God, since thou canst in truth say, “I have laboured many years and gained nothing.” And seeing thy poverty, exert thyself to employ thy strength with greater fruit henceforth; examine the causes of thy shortcomings, and bewail them before God; entreat His pardon for thy negligence, and implore grace in order to make up in the future for what thou hast lost in thy past life.

Fourth Point.—Consider the very copious draught of fishes enclosed by the disciples through their obedience to Christ, and how they called their companions to aid them in their toil, and they came and helped them, and both the ships were filled with fish, securing thus great profit from their exertions. Ponder what fruit is derived from labouring in company with the virtuous, and from their exhortations, examples, and earnest labours, and draw thence desires of abiding in the society of the just, and of being assisted by their advice and examples, and of being animated by a holy emulation in the service of God. Behold the profit and progress made by others,

who in a short time have far outstripped thee, and excite thyself, with the aid of God, to serve Him better, and to outstrip all others.

EIGHTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON PURITY OF CONSCIENCE AND PERFECTION OF LIFE.

First Point.—Set before thyself a soul in the state of sin, and a soul in the state of grace. Consider attentively, and contemplate the difference that exists between the one and the other. The soul that is in a state of grace and friendship with God is beautiful and lovely as the angels of heaven, that which is in sin is hideous and abominable as the demons of hell. The soul that possesses grace enjoys great peace and interior tranquillity; that which is in sin is pressed on all sides with fear and alarm, and suffers continual war within itself. The soul that possesses grace is the child of God and the heir of His glory, the hope of obtaining which fills it with joy and consolation whatever befalls. The soul that is in sin is disinherited from the kingdom of heaven and condemned to hell, into which it dreads to fall at each step. The former is in perfect repose, and the latter in great toil and continual anxiety; the one heaps up treasures of good works for heaven, the other loses all. Contemplate these two states; see which of the two thou wouldst choose for thy soul, and seek it at once with the grace of the Lord.

Second Point.—Consider in what this purity of soul consists, namely, in a conscience pure and free from all stain of sin. Such a soul admits no sin, however small, restrains, by the grace of God, all the inordinate inclinations of the flesh, subjects them to reason and to the Divine will, endeavours with all its power to unite itself

most perfectly with that will, desires and longs for naught but what God pleases and wills, adjusts itself in all things, and concerning all things, to His most righteous will, which is the aim of whatever it projects, decides, or executes. Think slowly over all this, contemplate this degree of perfection, and turning thine eyes on thyself, see how far thou art from having attained it, and how different thy life is from what it should be. Beg of God to give thee His most holy grace, in order to purify thy conscience from all imperfection, and to grant that, aspiring after what is most perfect, thy will may at last become most intimately united with His will.

Third Point.—Consider how agreeable this perfection of life is in the sight of God, of angels, and of men, and what glory is given to the Lord by those who aspire to this degree of perfection, since He says that His delight is to dwell with them, and that, as He revealed to the glorious St. Teresa of Jesus, He takes pleasure in souls adorned with the flowers of these virtues as in a paradise of delights. Strive with the grace of God to give Him this pleasure, and to draw Him into thy house by the fragrance of these flowers. Remember how often thou hast banished Him from thee by the bad odour of thy vices; cleanse thy conscience, adorn it with virtues, and thou wilt become a paradise for the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate in the presence of God what means thou shouldst use in order to acquire, preserve, and increase this perfection, namely, hatred of sin, an ardent desire of advancement, mortification of the flesh, silence towards men and prayer to God, withdrawal from earthly concerns and affection for heavenly ones, loving God above all things with most perfect charity, and fervently devoting thyself to the study of all virtues, beginning with self-contempt, and tending to perfect union with God. By these steps is the summit of perfection reached; God is on the ladder to lend His Hand to those who ascend it; entreat Him to extend It towards thee, with a firm confidence that He will do so, for He

denies His succour to none who strive to mount it. Take courage and ascend, for He will assist thee.

EIGHTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PERFECTION TAUGHT BY THE LIFE OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

First Point.—To-day being dedicated to the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady, let us meditate on the example of perfection and sanctity which she gave to the world in the following points. First, consider the fervour of spirit with which she aspired to perfection. From the first instant of her most pure conception until the hour of her happy departure for heaven, she employed all her strength in achieving and increasing it by all possible means, obtaining grace from heaven and co-operating continually therewith, augmenting her wealth by every action, whether interior or exterior, and growing in perfection every moment without ceasing. Excite thyself by her example to seek perfection, and to progress therein by every action of thine whether exterior or interior.

Second Point.—Consider her purity and rectitude of intention, seeking and desiring in all things the glory of God; what hatred she had for sin, and for every shadow thereof, never permitting herself the least imperfection, nor anything whatsoever which might stain her soul, for the sake of any earthly interest, however great, and this to the extent that she would willingly have forfeited her life a thousand times rather than commit the slightest fault or do the least thing displeasing to God. For this reason is she compared to the ermine, of which it is said that it has so great a horror of staining itself, that if there be mud outside its dwelling, it suffers itself to be seized

by the dogs rather than soil its fur, preferring death to the least stain, wherefore the motto given to it is, "*Malo mori quam foedari*,"—I would rather die than defile myself. Even greater than this was the abhorrence that the Blessed Virgin had of sin, from whom thou shouldst learn to banish it from thy heart, and derive from this meditation a most firm resolution to die rather than to defile thy soul by yielding to it.

Third Point.—Consider how great was the purity of the most pure Virgin in both mind and body. Consider successively the five senses and the interior powers of the soul, and then note the very high perfection she reached, and the very intimate union of her will with God to which she attained, having no preference for anything whatsoever, but according to His good pleasure, ever attentive to seek in all things His greater honour and glory, forgetful of her own interest. Contemplate her bright example, the sweet perfume of her virtues, the sanctity of her soul, the peace of her conscience, her love and most perfect charity towards God and her neighbour, and that interior paradise of delights in which God recreated Himself and took such pleasure. Give Him infinite thanks for having given to the world so perfect a pattern of sanctity, rejoice at her perfection, praise and extol her, and through her, her Creator. Entreat Him, as He has given thee this model, to give thee likewise grace to copy it, and beseech the Blessed Virgin herself to obtain this for thee from the Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider by what means the Blessed Virgin attained to this perfection, and by what steps she ascended to this pinnacle of sanctity, namely, by the penance she unremittingly performed, by her recollection, silence, labour, and prayer, by her patience and constancy in all her trials, by her burning love for God and His most Holy Son, by the humility and fervour with which she always served Him, and by her other virtues. Follow in her footsteps, adjusting thy life to hers as far as thou art able, for with such a guide and companion thou wilt

advance so greatly as to achieve, by the grace of God, very high perfection.

EIGHTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Fifth Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. V.)

In this Gospel Christ assures us that if our justice exceeds not that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who took vengeance on their enemies, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He takes occasion thence to threaten with the gravest punishments all who offend others by their words; and He commands that any one who has anything against his brother should not offer sacrifice to God until he has first been reconciled.

First Point.—Consider in what the virtue and sanctity of the Scribes and Pharisees consisted, and in what thine should consist in order that thou mayest enter into the kingdom of heaven. They attended only to what was exterior, endeavouring to appear holy before men, caring not to be so in the interior of their souls before God by the practice of solid virtue. Wherefore Christ called them¹ whitened sepulchres, externally beautiful, but hideous and putrid within. Fly all such hypocrisy, make it thy study to acquire solid and perfect virtues, and to avoid vanity and human respect, in order that the gate of heaven may be open to thee. Open thine eyes to perceive the vanity of this world, and entreat the assistance of the Lord that thou be not blinded thereby, but mayest endeavour to be humble, and to please His Divine Majesty in all things.

Second Point.—Consider how, instead of exceeding the Scribes and Pharisees in justice, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, thou hast often remained behind, and

¹ Matt. xxiii.

hast been worse than they, since both exteriorly and interiorly thou hast offended against God and thy neighbour, outstepping the divine law and the bounds of reason. Recall thy past life, acknowledge thy sins and thy lack of that virtue, by which heaven is won. Ask pardon of God, and hasten to lay up a store of merit in order to purchase heaven, and to enjoy the glory of God our Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the earnestness with which Christ commands thee not to offend against thy neighbour by hating him or bearing ill-will against him, either in word, or deed, or thought; and the facility with which thou dost break His commandments, wounding thy brethren by injurious and offensive words, and by inimical actions and desires. Draw thence a firm resolution to correct thy speech, to bridle thy tongue, to repress thy anger, and not to offend thy neighbour for the sake of anything whatsoever.

Fourth Point.—Consider what perfection is required of those who approach the holy sacrifice of the altar, since Christ commands the Pharisees to leave their offering if they perceive in themselves any stain of rancour, and to go first and be reconciled with their neighbour, and then return to the altar. Oh, most exalted Sacrifice, worthy of all reverence; and oh, what carelessness and rashness of men to approach it whilst in sin and without the purity of conscience that it demands! Place thy hand on thy breast, and observe how greatly thou art wanting in what is due to this Lord, Who does thee so great a mercy in giving thee His Body and Blood in this Divine Food. Beg His pardon for thy neglect and the faults thou hast committed against Him, and implore His grace to amend, to purify thy conscience from every stain and imperfection, and to dispose thyself worthily to receive in thy poor dwelling so great a Lord.

*EIGHTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. V.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ requires that our virtue should exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, of whom He said that they practised not what they taught, and laid on others a burthen which they would not so much as move with a finger of their own, and therefore He excludes them from the kingdom of heaven ; for he only who practises what he teaches shall have a share in His kingdom. Ponder attentively thy life and actions, and see whether thy virtue exceeds theirs. Consider whether thou dost what thou sayest, whether thou dost put in practice what thou teachest, whether thy actions agree with thy words, and whether thou keepest the law of God perfectly, and make it thy study to exceed the Pharisees in virtue, in order that thou mayst enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Second Point.—Consider that Christ is not satisfied by thy doing no injury to thy neighbour, but He requires that thou shouldst not even be angry with him, nor affront him in words ; for whomsoever, He says, shall be angry with his brother shall be condemned at the judgment, and he who shall say to his brother “Thou fool,” shall be condemned to hell. Consider how unbridled is thy tongue, and how many injurious words thou usest towards thy brethren, and dread the wrath of God, for He will be angry with thee if thou art angry with them. Implore His grace to be patient and long-suffering with thy neighbours, loving them, and always speaking kind words to them.

Third Point. — Consider what St. Austin remarks, namely, that Christ here designates three distinct punishments for three different sins. To him who is angry with his brother, the condemnation in judgment is assigned ; to

him who speaks contumeliously to his neighbour, the condemnation in the council, which is composed of many judges; and to him who says "Thou fool," the punishment of hell; because God has ordained that each sin shall have its own particular and suitable chastisement. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider how many pains and punishments thou hast deserved for the sins of thy life, and what tortures await thee for so great a number of evil words and actions as thou hast been guilty of against thy brethren. Tremble at the judgments of God, bewail thy sins in His presence, and draw from this meditation a very firm resolution to amend and do good to thy neighbours, even though thou mayst receive only evil from them.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, in this Gospel, Christ cuts off all occasions of discord in order to wall in His city with peace, and to establish us therein. Ponder how greatly He loves peace, and how earnestly He endeavours to maintain it amongst His chosen ones. Derive hence a firm resolution to second His intention with all thy strength, striving to maintain peace amongst all men and to banish discord, that enemy of the charity of Christ. Pray to His Divine Majesty, beseeching Him to establish peace first in thy soul by peace with Him, for if it is a great evil to be at enmity with men, far worse beyond comparison is it to be the enemy of God; and, secondly, by peace with all men, especially with the princes and prelates of His Church and with religious. Offer thyself at His feet to serve Him in this manner, even to laying down thy life for His love.

EIGHTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE LOVE THAT CHRIST BEARS US, AND ON THAT HE
WOULD HAVE US BEAR ONE TOWARDS ANOTHER.

First Point.—Consider how Christ in the Gospel constitutes Himself the Guardian of our lives and of our honour, forbidding by grievous punishments that any one should offend against us by deed, word, or thought, or bear ill-will against us, exhorting all to love and fraternal charity. Draw hence affections of gratitude to the Lord, and of desire to accomplish His will, being solicitous for His honour and glory as He is for ours and very especially for thine, whereby He imposes on thee the obligation of being as zealous for that of thy neighbour as for thine own.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom meditates, Christ our Lord commands us to leave our sacrifice at the altar and go first and be reconciled with our brother, because the sacrifice of those at variance with one another is not agreeable to Him, neither will He accept it from their hands; and whereas God is appeased by sacrifices, and is moved thereby to pardon our offences, discord is so displeasing in His eyes that He will not accept sacrifices from those who are not united by fraternal charity. Ponder with the Saint how great is the mercy of God, who places our welfare before His honour, not accepting the honour offered Him by sacrifice unless we are first united in concord and brotherly love. O Thou good God! would that we knew how to praise and bless Thee worthily for such excessive love and such ardent charity! God desires that we should first be united amongst ourselves and then be united with Him; for He can have no friendship with God who has none for his neighbour. Ponder

these truths, and derive from them lively affections of love and charity towards thy neighbour and a high esteem for this virtue.

Third Point.—Consider that for the establishment of this peace which God wishes should exist amongst men, in order that He may be at peace with them, it is necessary to forget injuries, to forgive one another our mutual insults and offences, and for the love of Christ to convert anger and ill-will into love and benevolence. Fix thine eyes on His cross, and behold Him nailed thereto for thy love, praying to His Eternal Father for His enemies, and learn to forgive thine and to pray for them. Behold with what readiness God pardons thee so many sins, and be not thou difficult in pardoning thy brethren ; for God will not forgive him that forgives not his neighbour. Lay great stress on the consideration of this point, and resolve to forgive every one for the love of Christ and for the sake of peace.

Fourth Point.—Raise thine eyes to the celestial Jerusalem of heaven, of which Christ makes mention in this Gospel, and contemplate the peace and concord of all its inhabitants, what heartfelt love they bear towards each other, a thousand times greater than if they were all children of one mother, for they all love one another in God, in whom they are united by the indissoluble bond of love which no discordant act, word, or thought can disturb. Ask of God grace to imitate them in thy relations with thy neighbour ; beseech Him tenderly to unite and bind us all together in Him with the chain of perfect love and the indissoluble bond of perpetual and eternal charity, which, beginning now, shall endure in the next life for ever and ever.

*EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE PUNISHMENTS OF THE JUDGMENT AND OF HELL
MENTIONED BY CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider the first punishment with which Christ threatens those who are angry with their neighbour, which is that of the judgment, in which He says they will be condemned as guilty of grievous sin. Ponder the rectitude of the Judge of that tribunal at which the devils will be the accusers, and at which a most rigorous account will be exacted, and strict note taken of every idle word and of every slightest action performed by man in this world; so that, as holy Job affirms, he will be scarcely able to answer for even one in a thousand of the charges made against him; how then wilt thou be able to answer for all the sins of thy life, for the words thou hast spoken to thy neighbours, and the times that thou hast been angry with them? Remember and consider that it is not possible to escape this arraignment, nor will there be any means of compounding it hereafter, but that undoubtedly thou wilt have to appear before that tribunal, the sins of all thy life will be charged against thee, and thou wilt have to answer for them. Prepare thyself, therefore, in good time, adjusting now thy account, in order to be able to give a satisfactory one hereafter.

Second Point.—Consider the punishment of hell with which Christ here threatens the uncharitable and those who insult their neighbour, which is more bitter than any human tongue can express or human understanding comprehend, however much it may ponder and expiate thereon. Descend in spirit into that dark and dreary dungeon; behold the horrors of that dwelling, the palpable obscurity suffered by the damned, who never see the light, the numberless numbers crowded together in

that narrow prison, the intolerable stench, the society of the demons who torture them, the confusion that reigns amongst them, the ceaseless cries and moans, the burning fire that devours them, the anguish, the sobs, the parching thirst they experience, the accumulation of all sorts of torments, infirmities, and sufferings which each one of the damned endures without any relief, or consolation, or hope thereof, the gnawing worm of conscience that eats at their heart, and, above all, lay stress on the eternity of these sufferings, for ever and ever without limit or end, whilst God is God. Consider and see what would not the damned give to escape therefrom, and what thou wouldst not do not to go there, and take heed in time, shun sin, avoid all rancour and injurious words, of which Christ here speaks, in order that thou be not thereby condemned.

Third Point.—Consider how St. John Chrysostom ponders that our Redeemer here made mention of the kingdom of heaven and of the pains of hell in order that the one might receive greater prominence from the consideration of the other. Reflect on both these places; compare the one with the other, the glory of the good with the sufferings of the wicked, and behold the difference that exists between them, and that of necessity one of these two abodes must be thine, either to reign with Christ and the blessed in heaven for ever, or to suffer with the demons and the damned in hell. Draw hence a lively desire of salvation, fear of God and of His chastisements, and a yearning desire of His rewards; beg of God to stretch forth His hand to assist thee, that thou fall not into hell, but by His grace mayest ascend to heaven.

Fourth Point.—Lastly, consider what St. John Chrysostom says on those words, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire," that he in truth is a fool who ignores God and keeps not His commandments, and he is wise who knows how to serve God and to save his soul. Oh, what great wisdom is

this, and how many are there who, esteemed as wise by the world, are condemned as fools before God, because they ignore that which is of the greatest importance to them, namely, their salvation ! How many, on the contrary, does the world hold to be fools who are most wise in the judgment of God and of the heavenly court, because they know how to despise that which is transitory and perishable, and to love and seek that which is eternal. Reflect on thyself, and consider what manner of life thou dost lead ; take cognisance of the state of thy soul, see what opinion God has of thee, and heed not the judgment of men. Be not so foolish as to set aside the gold for the sake of the mud, precious stones for sham ones, and the reality for the shadow ; beg light from God to know the truth, and strength to embrace and follow it, and to esteem what deserves to be valued, that is, virtue, and to despise what the world worships, deceived by false appearances.

EIGHTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON CHRIST, THE MODEL OF SANCTITY AND PERFECTION.

First Point.—Christ our Lord tells us in the Gospel of St. Matthew, “Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart,” which words apply to the whole course of His life, in which He teaches us the way of perfection. Contemplate, O my soul, the immense goodness of the Saviour, Who chose to come down from heaven to become man in order to be thy Master, and to teach thee at so great a cost to Himself the way of virtue and the height of perfection. Consider Who Christ is and who thou art, and how important is His teaching and the office He has taken on Himself of thy Master. Render Him infinite thanks for so doing, entreat Him humbly to

admit thee into His school and to deign to accept thee for His disciple, and resolve firmly to become His follower and to learn from His life and teaching how to direct thine.

Second Point.—Consider the life of Christ from the manger to the cross, the whole course whereof was a lesson of sanctity and of how to walk on the road of perfection. Meditate the contempt of the world with which He lived as a pilgrim on earth and a citizen of heaven; contemplate His actions at the various stages of His earthly career, what purity of life, without stain or blemish of sin or shadow of imperfection. Take note of His every word and movement, count His steps, and in all thou wilt find a pattern of humility, gravity, modesty, temperance, charity, patience, meekness, and submission to the holy law of God. Contemplate thyself in this mirror, and beg of God light to know thy faults, to correct thine errors, to follow in His footsteps, to imitate His virtues, and to journey in His company, bearing thy cross along the way of perfection.

Third Point.—Consider the interior sanctity of the soul of Christ our Lord and the perfection of His Spirit. Behold the intention which directed all His actions to the greater glory of His Eternal Father and the good of souls. Behold His understanding ever occupied in the contemplation of God, His will ever most intimately united with the Father's, having no other desire than His good pleasure, and solely occupied in loving Him, His memory ever employed in the things of His service, without for an instant losing sight of Him, continually making acts of love and most perfect charity, His interior spirit constantly manifesting itself in his exterior actions, which were all performed with extreme perfection. Draw hence a model for thyself, and although on account of thy weakness thou canst not reach the height of His perfection, at least aspire towards it; and since he exhorts thee to learn of Him, choose Him for the Master of thy life, and follow His example as far as thou

art able. Solicit His grace, and He will give it thee, that thou mayst be able to imitate Him and to realise His desire.

Fourth Point.—Consider the patience of Christ, both that which He manifested in this world, suffering so much for us, and that which He still exhibits in bearing with the many offences of sinners. Learn to be long-suffering and meek of heart towards all, not only towards those who do good to thee, but likewise towards those who injure thee; take the yoke of His law on thy shoulders, and thou wilt find rest for thy soul, according to the promise of the Lord.

NINETIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

HOW THE ANGELS TEACH US PERFECTION.

First Point.—Consider that the angelic spirits are likewise teachers of perfection to man in those of their actions that are known to us. Contemplate first how they were created in grace and adorned with so many and such excellent virtues, and how they at once acknowledged God for their Lord and Creator, and gave Him thanks for the favours He had conferred on them, abasing themselves in His presence and offering themselves to His service. Draw hence affections of humility and gratitude towards thy God for the benefits He has bestowed on thee, and thank Him for them, offering thyself in union with these exalted spirits to serve Him eternally.

Second Point.—Contemplate the ardent affection with which the angels love God, and how they have no other occupation than praising and serving Him. Penetrate by meditation into their innermost will; behold how united and conformed it is to that of God. Entreat the

Lord to give thee some share in the abundant wealth of grace which He has bestowed on them, in order that thou mayest be able to imitate them in submitting thy understanding and thy will to His, loving Him and serving Him with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and with all thy heart.

Third Point.—Consider the obedience so exact, so prompt, and punctual with which they serve God and obey Him, flying to execute His commands without resistance or delay or any other contrary disposition, but rather with unspeakable promptitude and rapidity. Oh, that we men thus obeyed the commands of God! Beseech Him to deign to subdue thy insubordination, to overcome thy repugnance, and to give thee His grace in order to imitate the obedience of the angels in serving His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider the continuous prayer with which they praise God; for, as Christ says, they always see His face, although they descend into the world to fulfil the ministries with which He entrusts them. Observe the manner in which they execute His commands without ever staining themselves by the slightest imperfection, but, on the contrary, always praising and blessing His Divine Majesty in all events, whether prosperous or adverse, with perfect equanimity in whatever circumstances, never being proud or vain in success nor discouraged or sad in adversity. Take to thyself this lesson, and learn the perfection which shines forth in the angels; implore God to give thee His Spirit that thou mayest be able to reproduce it in thy soul, and, like the angels, serve, love, obey, praise, and glorify Him in all thine actions.

NINETY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PERFECTION OF THE SAINTS, AND HOW WE SHOULD IMITATE IT.

First Point.—Place before thine eyes the perfection of life that shone forth in the saints on earth from the day on which they enrolled themselves in the army of Christ to fight under His banner; and meditate, in the first place, the determination with which they cast aside all worldly things, devoting themselves with all their strength to the service of God. Consider the holy apostles, all the holy confessors, hermits, virgins, and religious; render a thousand thanks to God for the favours He bestowed on them, and beseech Him to grant thee the favour of His assistance, that thou mayest despise the world and devote thyself to His service.

Second Point.—Consider the penitence of the saints, the rigour with which they treated their bodies; how they mortified their passions, what silence and recollection they maintained. Behold how continual were their fastings and penances, their prayer and contemplation, their obedience and humility, and their other virtues, which were the steps by which they ascended to the heights of perfection. Excite thyself to follow them, and beg of God His grace to imitate them, and He will certainly give it thee if thou dost resolve to walk in their footsteps.

Third Point.—Consider the patience of the saints in the midst of trials, their humility amidst honours, the contempt of themselves evinced in their actions, their equanimity under all circumstances. Entering into the interior of their souls, contemplate how united their will was to that of God, how submissive to His decrees, how prompt they were in hearkening to His voice, how eager was their obedience in executing His commands, and how

anxious they were to please Him, to serve Him, and to glorify Him in all things, never seeking their own interest in anything, but only the greater honour and glory of their God. Note the purity of their souls, and the magnitude of their virtues, how they always aspired to what was most perfect, and continually increased their wealth of merits. Praise God in His saints, and offer to follow them; beseech the saints themselves to instruct and assist thee in the imitation of their virtues, in order that, following in their footsteps and journeying with them, thou mayest reach the summit of perfection.

Fourth Point.—Consider the singular favours that God bestowed on the saints in this life on account of their great merits, the glory with which He rewards them in the next, and the crowns which they now enjoy in the company of the Lamb with the angels surrounding the throne of His glory. Contemplate their beatitude, and that eternal felicity which will have no end, and strive to imitate them in the hope of so magnificent a reward. Cast thyself at their feet, beseeching them to lend thee a hand, and to be thy advocates before God in order to obtain His grace; implore and entreat the Lord Himself, by the merits and intercession of the saints, to grant thee grace to begin to serve Him, and to travel onwards perseveringly, all the days of thy life, until thou dost reach the high and holy mountain of Sion.

NINETY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Sixth Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY—(MARK VIII.)

The Gospel relates a miracle wrought by Christ our Lord, by which He fed four thousand persons, who had followed Him into the desert, with seven loaves and a

few fishes; the remnants of which being gathered up, filled seven baskets.

First Point.—Consider the fervour of those who followed Christ, attracted by His heavenly doctrine, how for three whole days they forgot the sustenance of their bodies for the sake of the food of their souls which they received at the hands of Christ. Blush in His presence, acknowledging thy tepidity and thy lack of the necessary fervour to follow God, so bound and wrapped up art thou in temporal pleasures, which thou dost prefer to those spiritual and divine things which are the food of the soul. Draw from this meditation great esteem for the doctrine of Christ; desire to follow Him, and to postpone all earthly concerns to the welfare of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider the care the Saviour evinced for those who hearkened to His words and followed Him into the desert, what pity He felt for them, and how He compassionated their needs. Oh, what a truly paternal heart, so loving, benign, and pitiful! Learn from His solicitude to be considerate of the needs of thy neighbour, showing mercy towards all, and thou wilt find God merciful towards thee.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ asked His disciples whence He could obtain relief for the necessities of those who followed Him, not for want of knowledge, but in order to test their faith and confidence. Oh, how often does God act thus with thee, deferring to grant thee things that are needful to thee, and even opposing obstacles in thy way, in order to try thy faith and confidence. Draw light from this trial to which our Lord subjected His disciples never to lose confidence in His goodness, for though He delays and puts difficulties in the way of what thou dost desire and solicit, He knows the time and manner of succouring thee, and when thou dost least expect it thou wilt experience His mercy, as did His guests of to-day. O Lord, strengthen my heart, and give me Thy grace in order that I may trust most confidently in Thee, and if Thou shouldst try me as Thou

didst Thy disciples, I will rely on Thy bounty, Whose protection is always most powerfully manifested when the need is greatest.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the miracle wrought by our Redeemer in the desert; be present in spirit at His banquet, behold Him so affable, smiling, loving, benign, and generous towards all, standing in the midst of the multitude with His eyes and heart fixed on God, dividing and distributing the loaves and fishes with great love and charity to all the crowd. Behold the people seated and the Redeemer standing, they eating and He multiplying the food, and distributing it to them with excessive benignity and many tokens of love; the apostles waiting upon all, and giving thanks to God for so great a miracle and so signal a mercy. Praise Him, thou also, with them; give thanks likewise to Christ, and beseech Him not to allow thee to remain hungry whilst He feeds all the rest. Cry aloud, entreat and implore Him to give thee one morsel of the remains of His feast; coming from His hand it will sustain thee.

NINETY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE BANQUET GIVEN BY CHRIST IN THE DESERT.

First Point.—Consider how Christ waited three days before succouring the need of those who had followed Him, because He desires that we should acknowledge our necessities, and the need we have of Him to assist and relieve us therein. Enter into thyself and recognise thy weakness, how little thou art, how impotent of thyself, and how in all things and for everything thou needest the grace of God. Cast thyself at His feet with humility, and He will be favourable to thee and will assit

thee with His grace, in order that thou mayest be able thereby to do that which of thyself thou canst not achieve.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ gave this banquet, in the desert, where the people had nothing to eat, nor any means of obtaining succour in their need, because the Lord assists with His providence those who abandon the pleasures and feastings of this world, and that, when they are most destitute and when all human aid fails. Whence thou shouldst draw two lessons : the one is to abandon all the delights of this world in order to enjoy those that God offers, and to render thyself worthy to sit at His table and partake of His banquet, which He offers not to those who regale themselves with earthly pleasures and delights. The other is of confidence in God, knowing that He awaits the time of our greatest need and the moment of most pressing want in order to manifest His providence and to show forth His generosity, succouring us with His gifts when human aid most completely fails.

Third Point.—Consider the quality of the viands that composed this feast, which were barley bread and a few fishes, our Lord providing not dainties, but what should relieve want, what was necessary for the support of man, not superfluities. Oh, what a lesson He gives thee of shunning superfluities in food and clothing, in jewels and appointments, and in all things ! Little is necessary to thy support ; take from the river of this world the needful, and let the rest pass on. Remember that God rejected the soldiers of Gedeon who laid themselves down on the ground to drink, and selected those who stretched out their hands to take the water they needed, letting the rest run by ; because He rejects from heaven those who throw themselves into the vortex of this world and cling to its pleasures, and He chooses for His kingdom those who stretch forth their hands to take with moderation what is necessary for life and leave the rest. Beg of God His grace not to allow thy heart to deliver

itself up to temporal things, nor to accept more than what is needful, in order to secure that which is eternal.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the multitude relished that barley bread, and how it satisfied them; for the Evangelist tells us that “they had their fill,” and their hunger was quite appeased, so that they wanted no more, because God knows how to give greater sweetness and savour and more relish to penitential food than the world can give to all its dainty and delicate viands. Whence thou shouldst draw great love of penance, fasting, the asperities of mortification, and coarse food for Christ’s sake, accepting them most willingly, and trusting to Him that He will know how to render them savoury and more wholesome to thee than all the most palatable and dainty food of the age. O Lord! grant me this grace, that everything that is of the world may be bitter to me for Thy sake, and penance and mortification sweet, like the barley bread, as coming to me from Thy hand.

NINETY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON ALMSGIVING AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

First Point.—Consider how Christ spread a splendid table in the desert for those who had followed Him, hearkening to Him, and seeking the spiritual welfare of their souls; and He gave them both spiritual and material food, because to those who seek in the first place heavenly things the Lord gives likewise temporal ones. Whence thou shouldst learn to be very covetous of heavenly goods, and to have a firm confidence in the Lord that He will give them to thee if thou seekest them in the first place and with them temporal ones. Thus did He deal with Solomon when he asked for wisdom in order to know how to serve Him, and with those who

followed Him into the desert attracted by their eagerness for the spiritual advantage of their souls.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ gave the bread to His disciples, and they distributed it to the guests, because God gives wealth and worldly goods to His servants, not in order that they should keep them, but that they may distribute them to the needy and the poor who suffer want. See whether thou fulfillest this duty, whether thou givest alms with the wealth that God has intrusted to thee, or whether thou dost hoard it unnecessarily. Trust in His providence, which will not fail thee, and resolve to give alms with what God has bestowed on thee. Ask for a large heart like that with which He gifted Solomon, in order to distribute generously and with true charity the little or the much wealth that thou mayst possess to the poor and needy who require it.

Third Point.—Consider how those loaves and fishes increased in the hands of God, and were so multiplied as to afford sufficient and superabundant food for so great a concourse of people, and recognise therein how alms are multiplied when placed in the hands of the poor man who receives them in the name of God ; there do they increase and multiply as in the hands of Christ. Give thanks to the Lord for the wonders He works each day, and draw hence the resolution of placing all thy property in the hands of God, where it will be safe, and thou wilt receive abundant increase, as was the case with the barley loaves.

Fourth Point.—Consider how seven baskets full of fragments remained from this meal ; such is the abundance of the table of the Lord. The table of this world is scanty and its viands are savourless, without substance, and always insufficient, as was the wine at the marriage-feast of Cana ; but the table of God being the result of His liberality, is always most abundant. Give Him thanks for this ; rejoice to have such a Lord and Father, so magnificent and so generous ; resolve to serve Him

and to abandon the penury of the world. And consider, further, how these fragments were given to him who had supplied the loaves and the few fishes, because it is a part of God's providence to render a hundred for one. Draw from this meditation knowledge of the fruit of almsgiving and a great esteem for this virtue, and beg of God grace to exercise it towards thy neighbour, as He exercised it towards the multitude that had followed Him into the desert.

NINETY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE HOLY SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH, AND
ESPECIALLY ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

First Point.—Consider the mystery contained in the miraculous multiplication of the seven loaves in the hands of Christ by which all those who followed Him were nourished, for they are symbolical of the seven Sacraments which He has instituted in His Church for the benefit, life, and remedy of the faithful. Therein He has given us food for our souls, medicine for our infirmities, relief in our toils, and seven fountains of grace wherewith to remedy all our wants. Give Him many thanks for them; examine what use thou dost make of these heavenly remedies, and what fruit thou dost derive therefrom, and implore grace from God to benefit as thou shouldst by these salutary remedies.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ did not Himself distribute the bread to the crowd, but by the hands of His apostles, in order that they might have a share in that work of charity, and that the guests might esteem them the more, and be grateful to them for the food they received at their hands. In like manner, although Christ instituted the Sacraments, He wills that we should receive them through the hands of His priests, to whom He left

the keys and power to administer them, in order that we may respect and reverence them because of the inestimable benefits we receive from their hands, of the need we have of them, and of the esteem that God manifests towards them, since He intrusts to them the keys of His treasures. Ponder here the elevation of the sacerdotal dignity ; derive thence increased esteem for the ministers of God, and see with what respect and reverence thou shouldst treat them.

Third Point.—Consider those words of our Saviour, “I have compassion on the multitude. . . . I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way ;” which are especially fulfilled in the Holy Eucharist, which is the most august Sacrament instituted by Christ for the nourishment of souls ; and many, as St. Paul says, are weak and infirm because they approach not the table of the Saviour to eat of this bread of angels. Ponder how important its frequentation is, what strength it gives to the soul, and draw hence the desire of approaching and receiving it very often, in order to strengthen thy spirit, and to be able, like Elias, to travel courageously onwards to the mountain of God, which is the celestial Jerusalem.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ miraculously multiplied the loaves for the nourishment of those who followed Him, and how, in like manner, His presence is miraculously multiplied in many hosts, on many altars, and in many places, for the nourishment of souls. Ponder this unheard of wonder which He renews every day in His Church ; contemplate the intention and the love with which He performs it, and that which He thereby manifests towards thee ; admire His extreme bounty, and marvel at so unprecedented a favour. Give Him endless thanks for it ; entreat the angels and seraphim and all creatures to thank Him for and with thee, and consider what gratitude thou dost owe the Lord for so great a mercy.

NINETY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.****ON THE BANQUET THAT CHRIST OFFERS US IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.**

First Point.—Consider how this banquet that Christ gave in the desert to those who followed Him was a symbol and image of that which He daily offers in the Holy Eucharist, taking the bread in His hands, which are those of the priest, and blessing it, consecrating it, and distributing it to the faithful, and therein giving them His own Body and Blood, which, as we said in the previous Meditation, is an unparalleled favour. Ponder the value of this food, Who He is that gives it to thee, and what it is that He gives thee. See how thou shouldst receive it, venerate it, and how deserve it, and beseech the Lord to make thee worthy to receive it as thou shouldst.

Second Point.—Consider by what actions these persons merited this banquet from the Saviour, and to receive from His hand that miraculous bread, namely, by leaving their homes, and withdrawing to the desert in the company of Christ, never losing sight of Him, hearkening to His teaching, and keeping His words in their hearts for their salvation. Ponder this conduct, and learn to dispose thyself to receive the Lord by retiring for a time from the bustle of the world and of exterior business into the desert of thy heart, communing with God, hearkening to His voice, ruminating and digesting His words in the interior of thy soul by meditation.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ commanded the company to sit down and arrange themselves in good order, that the bread might be distributed to them. For He desires that the Divine Bread which He gives us in the Blessed Sacrament should be received without haste, and deliberately, with devotion and reflection on what

effects it produces in us, and with far other appreciation than if it were corporal food. Oh, that thou didst rightly meditate this point! Consider what fruit thou derivest from so many Communion, and the account thereof that God will require from thee! Enter now into account with thyself; examine how many times thou hast received Holy Communion, and what fruit thou hast derived therefrom. Bewail thy faults, beg pardon of God, and solicit His grace in order that this Celestial Bread may henceforth be fruitful in thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider what these guests did after they had eaten, namely, they all gave repeated thanks to our Saviour, proclaimed Him a great Prophet and the Redeemer of the world, and sought to crown Him King. This is what thou shouldst do after Holy Communion, give many thanks to God for the favour He has conferred on thee, proclaim Him King of thy heart, and beseech Him not to separate Himself from thee, but rather to remain with thee, and, as a munificent Sovereign, add favours to favours, multiplying His graces in thy soul in proportion to thy need.

NINETY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE BENEFITS OF GOD IN GENERAL.

First Point.—Consider Who God is, from Whose hand flow all the blessings and mercies that thou receivest, namely, a Lord infinitely good, wise, and powerful, the Author and end of all things, Who exists of Himself, without dependence on thee or any other, and on Whom thou and all things depend for their being and preservation. Contemplate that inaccessible majesty, and above all that immense and incomprehensible goodness and infinite power; admire His greatness, sovereignty, and

majesty, worship Him with entire submission and gratitude for the favours He confers on thee.

Second Point.—Consider who thou art on whom God bestows these favours, for there is nothing vile enough wherewith to compare thee ; thou art less than the slime of the streets or the dust of the earth, a very nothing in His comparison. Consider what an atom is to the sun, what a grain of sand to the whole earth, what a mere speck to the heavens ; and behold thou art less than this compared to God. With reason, then, did holy Job wonder that a Being so exalted should be mindful of a thing so vile, so weak, that He should regard so miserable, so wretched a creature as man ; how much more shouldst not thou wonder at His being mindful of thee, who art the most vile, the weakest, and most despicable of all creatures. Consider how little thou art worth, both as regards the natural and the spiritual order. In the natural order thou hast not of thyself strength for anything, and in the supernatural, thou art only capable of sins and offences against God. Humble thyself in His presence below the depths of the earth, and be overcome with wonder that He should remember thee, and not only that, but should love and value thee and bestow favours on thee.

Third Point.—Consider the multitude of graces and benefits that thou receivest from so great a Lord. He it was Who created thee ; He redeemed thee, He preserves thy life and being. He gives thee food and air to breathe ; the very water thou drinkest is a gift from His hand. Rise higher, and consider the spiritual benefits that He has conferred and still confers on thee, and thou wilt perceive that they are incomparably greater and more numerous than these natural gifts ; for besides redeeming thee, as has been already said, He has brought thee into His Church, whilst so many remain outside ; He has given thee His Sacraments, the state of life to which thou art called, the faith and knowledge thou hast of Him, graces and aids to salvation, the pardon of thy sins, His succour

to arise out of them, grace not to return to sin, and to protect thee against the assaults of the devil, and other innumerable graces both general and particular, for all of which thou dost owe Him intense gratitude, constant and faithful service.

Fourth Point.—Consider the motive that God has in conferring these favours upon thee, which is none other than His infinite goodness, love, and charity ; because He has been moved to do good to thee without having any need of thee ; rather (as has been said) thou hast need of Him in all things and for everything. Contemplate attentively this infinite charity of the Lord, and how bound thou art to reverence Him, love Him, and serve Him eternally with all thy strength. Then turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider how ill thou hast corresponded to such favours and benefits ; for not only hast thou been wanting in the service thou art bound to render Him, but moreover thou hast offended Him by innumerable sins. Let thy heart be riven with grief for such execrable ingratitude, and excite within it lively desires and purposes of amendment ; beg pardon for thy past offences, and implore grace to serve God henceforth as thou shouldst.

NINETY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF CREATION.

First Point.—Consider, first, how God created all things with the mighty arm of His omnipotence. The heavens and the earth, angels and men, the elements, the sun, the moon and the stars, all that moves in the heavens or beneath them, all receive their existence from His hand, and without Him was made nothing that was made, as St. John tells us, for God alone exists of Himself, without dependence on another. Contemplate this

omnipotence of the Lord, and marvel at His power, and at the wisdom with which He has created and disposed all things, and call on all creatures, as participators in this benefit, to aid thee in giving Him thanks for it.

Second Point.—Consider how God our Lord created all these things by His only will, without being besought thereto by another, or urged by the merits of any creature whatsoever, for none existed at that time, but only out of His pure grace and goodness, in order to do good and to communicate His perfections to the creatures that He brought to light. Draw hence affections of renewed gratitude, desires of extolling the infinite bounty of God, and likewise of imitating it by doing good to all as far as thou art able, according to the example of God our Lord, without limiting thyself in any way, or requiring to be sought or urged by others.

Third Point.—Consider how God drew all creatures out of nothing and gave them the being that they have. Ponder with what facility and in what order He created them, wherein shines forth not only His omnipotence, but also His infinite wisdom. Ponder what they were before He created them, that is, naught, as the things that have now no existence, and the Lord gave them the existence that they have by His only will, and in like manner He can destroy them and let them return to their own nothingness. His omnipotence and wisdom are likewise manifested in the order that exists amidst all created things and their dependence one on another. Contemplate the order and movements of the heavens, the diversity of the stars and their influences, the motion of the sun and of the moon, the varieties of creatures, the order and arrangement of the elements, the living things that people them, and how they yield each other subsistence. Observe the difference between the birds, the fishes, the animals, trees, grasses, flowers, stones, pearls, and other things that God has created. Praise and extol His wisdom and power in all these things, and humble thyself in the presence of such mighty power.

Fourth Point.—Consider, with St. Laurence Justinian, that all the creatures that God has created serve Him in that for which He gave them being, man only excepted, to whom He showed greater favour, and who should serve Him better. Review rapidly the heavens and all they contain, the earth and what is enfolded in its bosom, and so with the other elements, and thou wilt find nothing which does not serve the purpose for which God created it; man alone is rebellious to His will, strays away from it, and instead of serving God offends Him. Oh, supreme ingratitude for such exceeding benefits! Weep, bewail, and lament so grievous an offence; and entreat the Lord to sustain thee with His arm that thou mayst not fall into the like. Give Him infinite thanks for having brought thee out of nothing; acknowledge thyself His; beseech Him to fetter thee as His slave, in order that thou mayst never stray one step away from His service.

NINETY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. VII.)

The Holy Gospel for to-day contains a warning that Christ gave His disciples, admonishing them to beware of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing, but in truth are ravishing wolves, whom they were to recognise by their works and not by their words; for he is not worthy of credit nor of heaven who confesses God only with the tongue, but he who does the will of God and puts it in practice.

First Point.—Consider, first, how Christ our Lord charges thee to take heed and attend to the care of thy soul; and that this should be the first anxiety of thy heart, to keep watch and observe with whom thou dost deal, with whom thou dost converse, what words are

addressed to thee, what advice is given thee, what doctrine taught thee, lest by thy carelessness thou be deceived and led into error. Take heed likewise of the thoughts that knock at the door of thy heart, for frequently, even when they appear good at first, they lead to evil, and the devil feigns himself an angel of light in order to deceive. O Lord! grant me prudence and knowledge of the truth, and discretion to distinguish between good and evil. Give me grace in order that I may always watch and never fail in a matter so important as Thy service and the welfare of my soul.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ says, that many come with sheep's clothing who are interiorly ravishing wolves. Observe and consider whether thou be one of these. See whether thou be exteriorly a Christian, but interiorly a pagan and an infidel, and even worse, in thy conduct. See whether thou be in name and profession a religious or an ecclesiastic, and in thy life worse than are many secular persons who live better than thou, whose life is not in accordance with thy state, and whose interior agrees not with thy exterior. O sinner! what answer wilt thou give to God, Who knows thy wickedness, Who will judge thee most rigorously, and will look not to the exterior, as men do, but to the interior of thy soul and intention, in which true virtue consists! Think over this attentively, and beg of God grace to correct thy life and to abide in His presence, conforming thyself both exteriorly and interiorly to His most holy will.

Third Point.—Consider what our Saviour says, viz., that a man shall be known by his works, as a tree is known by its fruit. See what thine have been throughout the course of thy life, and what fruit the Lord of the vineyard will find in thee when He comes to seek the result of His labours. Open thine eyes and see thy poverty in the presence of God, how, instead of the fruit of good works, thou hast yielded only the thistles and briars of vice and sin. Weep over thy past life, and draw hence most firm resolutions of amendment, and of

recovering in the future what thou hast lost in the past.

Fourth Point.—Consider how our Redeemer adds that not all those who call Him Lord and who praise Him with their lips shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of His Heavenly Father. Ponder the importance of entering into heaven, and what a misfortune it would be if thou wert excluded thence, and not permitted to enter therein. Meditate what the Lord requires of thee in order to merit that kingdom, namely, the accomplishment of His will. Observe what He has manifested it to be His will thou shouldst do, according to thy state and profession, and resolve with all earnestness to perform it without delay. Offer thyself to the Lord to do in everything His holy will, renouncing thine own, and having neither desire or aversion beyond the holy will and pleasure of His Divine Majesty.

HUNDREDTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE FRUIT OF GOOD WORKS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ has planted thee in the paradise of His Church, in order that thou shouldst produce fruit of good works, and thou yieldest evil ones; and if He ordered the unfruitful fig-tree to be rooted up, what will He have done to the tree that produces nothing but briars? Cast thine eyes around on the trees of this paradise, and see what abundant fruits of good works they yield, some of penance, others of preaching, others of teaching the faithful, others of mercy and charity, and all of good example, and thou alone of all art fruitless. What a judgment awaits thee! and what will be the sentence of the Lord? Tremble at His judgments, at the account He will require thee to give of thy works,

and beseech Him with tears to grant thee time to improve them.

Second Point.—Consider the severe sentence that will be pronounced against the tree that yields not good fruit : “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.” Meditate attentively this awful decree, which is signed by the hand of God, and declared to men. Ponder the activity of that fire, those devouring flames, that endless torment of the fire that burns without destroying, and heats without ever reducing to ashes, but rather, like a raging fever, burns both interiorly and exteriorly without demolishing its victim ; thus is the torture endless, and it will endure for ever. Lay stress on the consideration of this fire, together with its duration, see what price thou wouldst not pay to avoid falling into it, and since God has given thee time, cultivate the tree of thy life which He has committed to thee in order that thou mayst yield fruit of good and holy actions, and mayst merit to be rewarded by the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider how the merit of good works consists, as Christ says, in the accordance of the interior with the exterior, and that the good action must be animated by a holy intention and desire of serving God and being agreeable to Him, and without any consideration of vanity or human applause, in order that we may not wear externally sheep’s clothing whilst the heart of a wolf beats below. Examine thy works in the presence of the Lord ; beg of Him light to know them and to correct them, and that they may be so performed by thee as to be pleasing to His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says that as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, so neither can a sinner perform good works meritorious for heaven. Cast thine eyes on those that thou hast performed during the course of thy life, and see how many have been profitless because not performed in a state of grace ; weep to see how careless thou art of amassing immortal riches,

whilst thou art so covetous of the empty and perishable wealth of this earth. Draw from this meditation a high esteem for the grace of God, a keen sorrow for all that thou hast lost through lack of it, and a firm resolution to secure it and preserve it at whatever cost of labour and care, perceiving it to be the root and heart of the good tree from which our works receive what merit they possess. Cry aloud to God from thine innermost heart, and affectionately beseech Him rather to annihilate thee than to deprive thee of His grace, for it were better to exist no longer than to live at enmity with God.

HUNDRED AND FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD CHRISTIAN.

First Point.—Consider that as the tree that does not bring forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire, according to the words of our Saviour, so on the other hand that which yields good fruit shall be valued by God and transplanted into the paradise of His glory. Pause here a moment, and ponder deliberately how one of these two fates must of necessity be thine, either to be transferred to heaven or cast down into hell; behold the great difference there is between the one and the other, and how important it is for thee not to fail in an undertaking which after this life cannot be amended, and take very much to heart the cultivation of that tree, in order that it may yield good fruit and be chosen for the garden of heaven. Cry out to God and to His saints to assist thee; make them thy advocates; do not forget them; compel them by faithful service, in order that they may be ever propitious to thee, and may lend thee a hand to ascend to glory.

Second Point.—Consider how the Redeemer says that in order to enter heaven it is not sufficient to praise Him with the lips, but His will must be done in all things ; for faith without works suffices not, neither is exterior religion enough without interior charity to secure salvation. Observe that thou art a Christian, and that it is necessary that thy life should correspond to that name, and that thou must honour God not with thy lips only, but far more by thy works. Consider whether they be such as to render glory to the Lord, and derive hence most fervent desires of acting in a most holy manner, and of praising God, not only with thy lips, but much more by thy deeds and with thy heart.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ has planted thee in His Church in order that thou shouldst be a fruitful tree, and not a profitless briar that wounds and injures. Moreover, He has watered thee with His precious Blood, and cultivated thee by the means of His ministers ; He has given thee the fountains of His Holy Sacraments, the rain of His grace, the warmth and heat of His Holy Spirit. See what profit thou hast derived from so many benefits, and what fruit thou hast yielded to God and to thy neighbour. Tremble at the account that will be required of them from thee, and draw hence a resolution to amend, and to render fruitful in thy soul the cultivation thou hast received from the Lord, yielding henceforth an abundant harvest of holy works.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ speaks here of thorns and of vines, by which are signified a good and an evil conscience ; the good conscience is figured by the vine, which yields abundant and sweet fruit, the evil conscience by the thorn, which instead of fruit produces only hurtful thorns. Oh, what thorns afflict the evil conscience, and what sweetness does the good one experience ! how barren is the former, how fruitful the latter ! Lay stress on this consideration ; observe the restlessness and disgust that thy soul has experienced when thy conscience has been evil, and the peace and sweetness thou dost enjoy

when it is good. Solicit grace of the Lord in order to purify thy conscience from all sin, to remove the thorns that pierce it, and to perform works worthy of His servant, in order to obtain that peace and tranquillity that a good and healthy conscience gives which is tormented by no remorse for any sin committed against Him.

HUNDRED AND SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON CHRIST OUR LORD, SIGNIFIED BY THE CLUSTER OF GRAPES.

First Point.—St. John Chrysostom, meditating on this Gospel, says that Christ is the cluster of grapes of which mention is here made, who hung from the tree of the cross; according to those words of the canticle, “My Beloved is to me as a cluster of grapes in the vineyards of Engaddi.” Contemplate what this heavenly Cluster of Grapes endured for thee, how He was seized, struck, trodden under foot, and pressed in the wine-press of the cross. See how this heavenly cluster is not to be found on the thorn tree of this world, neither does he merit to experience its sweetness who knows not how to suffer for the love of Christ. Contemplate what He suffered for thee, and blush to see Him choose the thorns and the cross whilst thou preferrest sensual pleasures and comforts, a soft bed and recreation of the senses; implore His forgiveness, and solicit grace to suffer for His love.

Second Point.—Consider, with the same St. Chrysostom, how Christ poured the wine of His Blood into the chalice of the altar, and gave thee His most Holy Body in the host, in which He offers Himself for thee. Ponder what He says in the Gospel of to-day, that grapes are not gathered off thorns, but off the good and fertile vine.

See whether thy soul be a fruitful vine or a thorny bramble, and accordingly whether thou dost deserve to receive this Lord. Render thanks to Him for the food and drink of His Body and Blood that He prepares for thee, and for this heavenly wine which He offers thee in order to rejoice and comfort thy heart. Beg of Him the dew of His grace and the cultivation necessary to render thee a vine fruitful in good works, instead of a thorny bramble yielding nothing but sins.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that each tree yields fruit according to its kind ; the good tree yields good fruit, the evil tree evil fruit ; grapes are not gathered from thorns, nor figs from brambles, because every one gathers what he sows. Oh, how soon will the time of the harvest come, and the autumn of death, when the fruits sown in the winter of this life will have to be gathered ! Consider what thou hast sown, according to which will be what thou shalt reap ; if thorns, thou wilt gather thorns, which will torment thee eternally ; but if good works, then most sweet reward of glory. Take heed now, whilst God grants thee time, what thou wouldst then wish to have done, because grapes are not gathered from thorns, and learn hence to sow holy works, which may procure for thee future glory in heaven.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ compares us to the fig-tree which He cursed because it bore no fruit although it was not the season of fruit ; because, as Origen tells us, there is no season at which the faithful should not yield the fruit of good works ; all times are seasons of work and labour whilst we live in this world. O my soul ! how art thou so idle, knowing not the hour when the Lord will come to require from thee the fruit of thy works, and the harvest He expects from His labours and care for thee, from the watering of His Blood and the benefits of His Holy Sacraments ? O Lord ! give courage to my heart, that I may begin to serve Thee with the fervour that I ought, and to correspond by my works to thy mercies ; grant me never to be careless in Thy holy

service, but rather to yield always the fruit of good works that Thou requirest from me.

HUNDRED AND THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE CREATION OF MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God, before creating man, created the whole of this universe, with so many and such divers creatures, for his service, preparing thus an abode for him, and adorning it, as Philo says, for his residence and enjoyment, and, as it were, becoming Himself his landlord in this world. Praise Divine providence, and the love God has shown to man and the benefits He has conferred on him, beginning even before man existed, with prescient love and care. Ponder how all these favours were bestowed on thee, whom He had in His mind whilst executing this work, which He conceived and performed for love of thee. See how He valued thee and how much He has done for thee, and render Him infinite thanks for it, offering thyself heartily to His service.

Second Point.—Consider how God deliberated with Himself as to the creation of man, not making him forthwith by His only word, as He did when giving existence to all other creatures, but taking counsel and saying, "Let us make man to our image and likeness,"¹ showing therein the preference He gave to man over all creatures, and manifesting that he was the work of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost all concurred in the creation of man, in order that he should know what he owes to all Three, should be grateful to them, and should learn not to undertake anything of importance without first turning

¹ Genesis i.

to Them and consulting Them. Draw hence affections of gratitude to God for the favour He has done thee, and learn not to act inconsiderately and without mature deliberation.

Third Point.—Consider how God formed man, and in him thyself, not as He created the rest of the creatures, but to His own image and likeness, making him, as St. Peter Chrysologus tells us, His vicegerent in the world and His living image, in order that all creatures should respect and obey him. Learn hence, besides the gratitude which thou owest to God, with what respect thou shouldst regard thyself, being the image of God; do not then deface His likeness by vice and guilt, nor despise it, mingling the precious jewel of His resemblance, which He has placed in thee, with the mire of sin, and thus lowering thyself by human vileness from the high estate in which He has placed thee.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the manner in which God formed man, taking the dust of the earth in His hands, and fashioning his body with such marvellous detail and adjustment, and then giving him breath from His own breath and a soul from His own Spirit;¹ and this in order that he might thus, as it were, derive his parentage from God Himself, Who gave him his rational soul with its three powers, the memory, the understanding, and the will, and an immortal life, as far as the soul is concerned, like unto God. O Lord! what can I render Thee for such numerous and great benefits as I have received from Thy hand? Who am I that Thou shouldst have formed me with Thine own hand? A thousand thanks will I render Thee for so singular a favour, entreating all creatures to unite their voices to praise and bless Thee for all Thy benefits; and of Thee, O Lord, I implore one more favour, namely, grace to serve Thee and to be grateful to Thee as I ought.

¹ St. Basil.

*HUNDRED AND FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Friday.*ON THE PRIMARY AND FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH OF THE
END OF MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God created thee in order that thou shouldst know Him, reverence Him, and serve Him in this life and enjoy Him in the next ; this is the end and object for which God created thee. Wherein thou shouldst ponder, first, the favour He did thee in giving thee the being thou hast, leaving uncreated an infinite number of creatures more noble and perfect than thou, to whom He might have given existence, which was a most signal favour. Dive deep into this truth, and consider what thou wast before God created thee, and thou wilt find that there is nothing so insignificant which is not greater than thou wast, since all that exists has being and some sort of value, however small it may be, and thou hadst none, and he who had purchased thee, however cheap, had paid too high a price. Behold what thou owest to God, Who drew thee out of nothing, gave thee a rational existence, made thee like unto Himself, and destined thee from that moment to enjoy Him eternally in His kingdom. Ponder, next, that He did not create thee in order that thou shouldst serve creatures, be they kings or princes, angels or seraphim, but in order that thou shouldst serve His Divine Majesty, Who is the Supreme Emperor of heaven and earth, of angels and of men, and to enjoy Him eternally hereafter. See how thou hast served Him until now, and how thou shouldst serve Him henceforth, and implore His holy grace to ensure that result.

Second Point.—Consider how exalted is this last end of thy creation, which is beatitude, and to enjoy God with His angels eternally in heaven. Contemplate the height of the dignity and felicity to which he attains

who reaches it, and the misery of him who fails to secure it, which exceeds all possible and conceivable wretchedness. Then reflect on thyself, and consider that it is possible to lose it, and that many have lost it who have committed fewer sins than thou. What will it profit thee to gain the whole world if thou dost lose thy soul? or what would it matter to thee to lose the whole world if thou lose not heaven? See of what avail is it to Alexander the Great that he made himself the master of the world, now that he is in hell, and will remain there for ever, and all that he gained others have enjoyed already for thousands of years. Ponder how this life is but a vast drama and brief act, in which each performs his part, and when once it is ended all are equal; and that real happiness or misery consists in performing our part well or ill, that is, in succeeding or failing in the ultimate object for which God created us all. Whence thou shouldst derive great contempt of the world, high esteem of heaven, and a yearning desire of securing thy last end, which is beatitude, without ever heeding aught beside.

Third Point.—Consider how God created all things in order that they should assist thee in arriving at this end of serving Him here and enjoying Him hereafter eternally. He did not create them for thee, for thee to enjoy them, taking delight in them for themselves, but in order that thou shouldst use them as means of serving God here now and enjoying Him hereafter. Whence a consequence is to be derived in which it is important to be very solidly grounded, because it is the foundation of the spiritual life—namely, a great indifference of soul in selecting amongst creatures those that may assist thee to secure this end without allowing thyself to be more inclined to those that are more beautiful, or rich, or delightful, or pleasant, than to others, however ugly, distasteful, unpleasant, or toilsome they be. And thus, as far as in thee lies, thou shouldst be as indifferent as the needle of a balance with regard to health or sickness,

poverty or riches, a hard life or a pleasant one, not inclining to one side or the other, desiring and embracing that only which is more conducive to the service of God and to the attainment of the end for which He created thee. This indifference our holy Father St. Ignatius calls the foundation of the spiritual life, and with reason, for thereon the whole edifice rests; and when this indifference is well established, all that is built thereon is stable and well ordered; but when it fails through inordinate affection for any creature, everything becomes disordered and misdirected. Wherefore it is important to make a firm resolution to adhere to this indifference, and to implore it of God our Lord in order to serve Him.

Fourth Point.—Reflect on thyself, and see in what condition thou art, and whether, unmindful of this indifference, thou art inordinately attached to the good things of this world, and endeavour to abandon crooked paths and to direct thyself undeviatingly towards thy end. Look on all created things as on a splendid table spread with various viands which God has placed before thee, in order that thou shouldst choose from amongst them those that are wholesome for thee, and shouldst leave those that might injure thee; and if, for the sake of the health of thy body, thou dost not feed on injurious or poisonous food, but only on such as is useful and profitable, how much more ought thou not to do the like in what concerns the health of thy soul, which is eternal and spiritual! Consider all things dispassionately, and see what may assist thee to serve the Lord here and enjoy Him hereafter, and resolve in His presence to make use only of these and to eschew all others, and God will help thee with His grace if thou dost seek it, placing thy trust in His goodness, as becomes thee.

*HUNDRED AND FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

ON THE CREATION AND SIN OF THE ANGELS.

First Point.—Consider how, after creating the heavens, God created the angels in His grace, and adorned them with all natural and supernatural virtue that became them as courtiers of His glory, and a portion of them, vain-glorious and proud on account of the favour that God had done them, ungratefully revolted against Him and refused obedience, and therewith the respect and submission they owed Him. Ponder how much better it had been for them had they been created in a less exalted state, and had less of which to be proud, rather than to have fallen into sin. Acknowledge it to be a mercy of the Lord that He denies thee some of the things thou dost ask for, and gives thee not such eminent talents as others possess, lest they should cause thy destruction. Draw hence, likewise, affections of gratitude and humility, abasing thyself the more at the feet of thy Creator the greater the favours He confers on thee and the more He enriches thee with His grace.

Second Point.—Consider what was the occasion of the fall of the angels, which, according to the most received opinion, was their refusing to acknowledge Christ as superior to themselves, Whose Incarnation and Humanity God revealed to them; and Lucifer, haughty and proud at seeing himself so gifted, so wise, and powerful, ~~esteemed~~ the sacred Humanity and refused to worship It, or acknowledge It as superior to himself, and, as St. John tells us in his Apocalypse,¹ one third of the stars of heaven followed his example. Ponder how great an evil is pride and contempt of others, and, on the contrary, how profitable is humility. See how much harm

¹ Apocalypse xii.

evil example does, and more so when given by the powerful, who shine as stars in the society of men. Beseech God to deliver thee from these vices, and to give thee grace to embrace humility, and never to prefer thyself to any one, but rather to subject thyself to all.

Third Point.—Consider how greatly this sin displeased God, since, though only a sin of thought, and committed by a creature so perfect and so beloved by Him, He at once, and without appeal, expelled from heaven all those who fell into it, subverting their thrones, and, as it were, effacing them from heaven, where, as St. John says, they were seen no more. Draw hence sentiments of fear; first, lest thou fall into sin, seeing that the angels fell; for if spirits so exalted and so prevented by grace yielded, how canst thou trust in thyself, so weak, miserable, and frail, so inclined to evil from thy very conception? Secondly, of fear of the chastisements of God; for if He pardoned not the angels, even less will He pardon thee; and if for one single evil thought He cast them from heaven into hell, what canst thou expect for so many evil thoughts, words, and works? Fear and tremble at the wrath of God, and dare not to offend Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the rigour with which God punished the angels, and the bitter and prolonged chastisement that He inflicted upon them, because from angels they were changed into demons, and from being the most beautiful, most noble, and most estimable of creatures, they became the most hideous and despicable of the whole world. For God deprived them of all the graces that He had bestowed on them, and of all His assistance for well-doing, leaving them in utter destitution, ignorance, darkness, and obstinacy, without any hope of remedy or escape from their sin, which he has continued to punish already for thousands of years, and will persevere therein without end. Ponder how great is the malice of sin, since God so abhors it, and punishes it with so severe and enduring a chastisement, without

ever relenting. Recognise its malice, and acquire an intense hatred of it, resolving to die a thousand deaths rather than to commit a single mortal sin. On the other hand, consider the mercy that God has shown towards thee in not having cast thee into hell, as He did the angels, although thou hast committed so many sins; but, on the contrary, He has exercised His clemency, awaiting thy repentance, offering thee a remedy by which to arise from sin, to recover His grace, and thereby thy right to heaven. O Lord! what can I render Thee for so signal a mercy? Blessed be Thou a thousand times for having used towards me a mercy which Thou refusedst to the angels! It grieves me, O God, that I have offended Thee. I purpose most firmly rather to die than to sin, to amend my past life, and to employ myself entirely in Thy service.

HUNDRED AND SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XVI.)

Christ in this Gospel recommends us to gain heaven by almsgiving, after the example of a steward who, when his lord was about to remove him from his stewardship for having dissipated his goods, purchased friends for himself by forgiving his debtors a portion of what they owed, in order that they might receive him into their houses when his master should expel him from his service.

First Point.—Consider, first, how Christ compares thee to a steward of the household of His Lord; for as a steward is not the owner of the goods, but only the administrator thereof, so in like manner thou art not the master of the goods that God has delivered to thy keeping, but only the steward, whose duty it is to distribute

and expend them according to His will, not thine. Therefore take note that He has not intrusted them to thee in order that thou shouldst thereby live luxuriously and triumphantly in the world, but in order to do good to the poor and needy and to spend it in His service. Thou art a steward, not the master; think over this, and implore the grace of God to fulfil thy office efficiently.

Second Point.—Consider that as the day of reckoning came when the master said to his steward, "Give an account of thy stewardship," so likewise will the day come, and perchance very speedily, on which God will say to thee the same words, "Render an account of thy stewardship." O sinner! consider what thou wilt experience when thou hearest that summons! What account wilt thou be able to give of thy whole life, of the evil thou hast done, and of the good thou hast neglected to do, of the talents that God has intrusted to thee, and of the opportunities thou hast had for doing good and winning heaven, of all thy words, works, and thoughts, of every least mirth, of thy property and temporal goods to the last farthing? Lay stress on the severity of the account and the rigour of the Judge, on the malice and pertinacity of the accusers, on the charges that will be brought against thee, and on the importance of the sentence; and do now, whilst thou hast time, what thou wouldst then wish to have done.

Third Point.—Consider those words of Christ as spoken to thine own self in the person of the steward, "Thou canst be steward no longer." Oh, words worthy of deepest consideration, and which thou must necessarily hear when God shall call thee to account, and when the time for negotiating shall be past, in which now, whilst life endures, we can lay up treasures of merit; but the hour of reckoning ~~once~~ arrived, the door is closed, time ceases, the opportunity is past, the season and power of gaining heaven are gone; if thou hast not already won it, thou canst not do so any longer, whatever be thy efforts. Derive hence a high appreciation of the

value of time, which God gives thee in order that thou mayst work out thy salvation and purchase heaven, and a great fervour in labouring therein to heap up immortal wealth before the sun of life goes down and the night of death comes, wherein no man can work.

Fourth Point.—Consider how this steward, finding himself called to account, discovered a remedy in almsgiving, forgave his debtors a part of their debts, and thus secured for himself friends to shelter him in his adversity and receive him into their houses when his master should eject him. Wherein our Redeemer teaches us that by almsgiving and charity we purchase the friendship of God and of His saints, so that when we go out of this world they will receive us into the tabernacles and dwellings of heaven. Ponder this for the profit of thy soul, and consider what utility thou hast derived from the money thou hast spent in banquets, repasts, and other vanities and pomps of the age. All has vanished like smoke, and there only remains remorse of conscience and the account that thou wilt have to render; but what thou hast spent in almsgiving is written in the register of God, and is heaped up in His treasury in order to repay thee with eternal glory. Draw light from this consideration to spend what thou hast left, not in the vanities and superfluities of the world, but in alms and good works, in order thereby to secure the friendship of God and of His saints, who, when thou leavest this life, shall receive thee into the eternal abode.

HUNDRED AND SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE INCONSTANCY OF THE WORLD AND THE
UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE.

First Point.—Consider how Christ compares Himself to a rich man, because such He really is—rich in spiritual

and true wealth, for all the things of this world are false, and no more than shadows. Consider the value of the riches of Christ, how enduring and stable, and then ponder the deceitfulness of earthly wealth and its instability, and resolve, with all the energy of thy soul, to seek the former and to despise the latter.

Second Point.—Consider the inconstancy of this world in what befell this steward ; for being prosperous, rich, and powerful with his master, in a moment, by one turn of the wheel of fortune, he fell from his position, and found himself poor, discredited, abandoned, and persecuted by those who defamed his character with his lord. See thyself in this mirror, and contemplate the inconstancy of the goods of fortune and of the honours of this world, and learn hence not to trust in them, nor to allow thyself to be carried away by their apparent splendour, but to fix the desires of thy heart on God and on eternal things, which are stable and endure for ever.

Third Point.—Consider how this steward was defamed by those of his own household, perchance by his very friends, a practice that is never out of fashion. Consider how little trust can be placed in men, and make thy friends of God and of His Saints, who will always be faithful and never abandon thee. Ponder, on the other hand, how this steward did not turn against his fellow-servants, neither did he complain of those who had spoken evil of him. What a great example of patience ! Draw hence a resolution of practising the like in whatever occasions present themselves, and towards those who persecute and calumniate thee, and implore grace of the Lord to suffer silently, and to return good for evil, according to the teaching of Christ.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which Christ concludes this parable : “ Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.” Ponder what are the dwellings that the heavenly citizens occupy ; compare them with the houses and abodes of the earth,

and thou wilt perceive that the most sumptuous palaces of the world are less than the caverns of wild beasts or mud huts of beggars in their comparison. Behold what folly and blindness is that of the world, which, for things so vile, exchanges such priceless palaces and eternal dwellings of such unutterable value, beauty, grandeur, delight, and satisfaction, and, above all, eternal, which will never end. Ponder deeply this duration, and let not thyself be deceived by the vanity and hollowness of this world, but rather resolve to despise it as vile and perishable, in order to win the immortal dwellings of the heavenly Jerusalem.

HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE PREPARATION BY WHICH ETERNAL LIFE IS
SECURED.

First Point.—Consider what St. Austin says, namely. that this householder praised his steward because he had prepared himself for the future without heeding the present, but only providing for that which was to come. O my soul! what praise wouldst thou deserve if thou didst look to the future, which must necessarily come, and didst prepare for thyself an eternal abode! Consider what folly it is of the sons of Adam to spend all their care on the present life that passes away as a wind, and not to think of the future which will endure for ever. They construct sumptuous palaces for this brief life, but they build themselves no dwellings for the life that has no end; they labour and sweat unwearyingly, they traverse sea and land with immense eagerness, in order to secure this world's perishable wealth which others will enjoy, and they have not courage, nor will they exert themselves

at all, to procure those real and immortal riches which they are to enjoy eternally in heaven. Meditate and contemplate the shortness of this life and the length of the next, and how all ends in death, and that after death comes the judgment, then the sentence, and after that eternal life. Behold how important it is to thee to enter into glory; prepare thyself for the future whilst thou hast time, as this steward did, and do now what thou wouldst wish to have done when death shall come.

Second Point.—Consider how this steward prepared himself for the future, namely, by pardoning the injuries he had received from those who had defamed him, by forgiving the debts due to him, and by doing as much good to all as he could, and thereby he recovered the favour of his master and his good name, and secured friends for the future. Take pattern from him, follow his example, and forgive injuries, insults, and debts; do good to all, and especially to those who injure thee, and thou wilt regain what thou hast lost, recover the grace of God, and heap up great merits for a future life.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that the children of this world are more prudent in their business and affairs than are the children of God in theirs. Observe what men of the world do in order to succeed in their undertakings to acquire wealth or procure for themselves the honours of the age, and be ashamed that their diligence should exceed thine in seeking after eternal riches. Bewail in the presence of God the blindness of these men and thine own carelessness, and see what answer thou wilt give to God when He weighs thee in the balance with them, and compares the diligence and exactitude with which they serve the world with the negligence and carelessness with which thou dost serve Him. O Lord! judge me now, and let us not await the future. I strike my breast and weep over my negligence and slothfulness in Thy service. I grieve to find myself so idle and negligent in Thy service; do Thou, O Lord, give me fervour, and enkindle Thy love within me,

in order that I may serve Thee with the ardour and diligence that I ought.

Fourth Point.—Consider what St. John Chrysostom meditates, namely, that this steward found his accounts in disorder when he was called upon to render them, because he had spent his time in idleness, and thus he says, “To dig I am not able,” because he had not the habit of labour, and he **that labours not in this life will find a great deficit** in his accounts for the next. Be **warned** by this example, and elicit from this meditation firm resolutions of making a good use of time; beg of God His grace to accomplish them, and endeavour to put them in practice forthwith.

HUNDRED AND NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON DIVINE AND HUMAN JUDGMENTS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ tells us to prepare ourselves for leaving this life “when you shall fail.” Contemplate that thou must infallibly depart out of this life, and that this departure will take place soon. Behold how little time remains to thee, and that all that is of this world will remain behind; and consider what thou wouldst have to take with thee if God were to call thee now and cite thee to leave at once. Ponder the affliction suffered by the steward when his lord told him that his stewardship was ended; and how, as St. John Chrysostom meditates on this Gospel, it was because he had a bad account to render, and he, with just cause, feared to render it to his lord. Thus do Christians fear and tremble at the hour of death; see, therefore, now, whilst thou hast time, how thou wilt find thyself at that hour, and, since it is inevitable, prepare thyself at once for it.

Second Point.—Consider the trial that this steward underwent in seeing himself accused to his master, and ponder how much worse it will be for a man to be accused before God. Note what enemies thou hast, who are more numerous than the atoms of which the sun is composed, and who cease not to accuse thee and seek to deprive thee of His grace; arm thyself, therefore, with vigilance, prayer, patience, and penance, in order to defend thyself from their attacks before God.

Third Point.—Consider how this householder would not decide against his steward on the accusations made against him, without first giving him a hearing. He called him and questioned him, repeated the charges brought against him, and asked for an account of his stewardship, wherein Christ teaches us to condemn no one without a hearing. Learn hence not to be hasty in thy judgments, nor to condemn others on what is reported of them without first hearing their defence. Beg of God grace to imitate Him in His dealings; ask Him for prudence and discretion to conduct thyself rightly in thine, proceeding with mature deliberation and a straightforward intention in all thy undertakings.

Fourth Point.—Consider how St. Luke says of this steward, that, finding himself called to account and cited by his lord, he entered into consideration and thought within himself what he should do in that plight, and how he could escape from it, and that in this meditation he found an exit and a remedy for his difficulty. Oh, that thou wouldst learn this lesson, and that, setting aside all secular business, thou wouldst enter into thyself, and meditate in thy heart what it behoves thee to do for thy salvation, in order to gain heaven and to secure the favour of God! Withdraw from the bustle of the world and retire with thy God into the secret of thy soul; cry aloud to His Divine Majesty, and implore Him for light to guide thee in all things, for counsel in thy doubts, and for resolution to carry out wisely the business of thy salvation.

*HUNDRED AND TENTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE SIN OF THE FIRST MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God, having created man, enriched him with many gifts, as mentioned above, and adding favours to favours, He created woman to be his companion, drawing her from a rib of his side, and giving her to him for his associate, in order that she should assist him to govern and to people the world ; wherein thou hast much to meditate. First, how God created man alone, in order, as St. Austin says, that he should acquire the love of solitude, and should give himself to it from time to time. Secondly, how He gave man a companion, because, as the Holy Spirit says, “ It is better to be two together than one alone,” for thus the one assists the other. Beg of God to give thee such society as may assist thee to serve Him, and may not be the cause of thy offending Him, as Eve was to Adam. Thirdly, ponder how God drew the woman from the rib, which is next to the heart, because she and man were to love one another cordially. Oh, that we were all united and bound together with the bond of perpetual charity ! Beseech the Lord to grant thee this charity towards all, and elicit a firm resolution to acquire it and preserve it as far as in thee lies, and likewise a desire to assist thy neighbour to the utmost of thy power and of his need, remembering that God has created thee in this world to be his companion and support, as He created Eve to be the coadjutrix of Adam.

Second Point.—Consider the precept that God imposed upon Adam and Eve of not eating of the “ tree of knowledge of good and evil,” whilst allowing them the free use of all the other fruits ; and they were so ungrateful that of this one alone did they eat, transgressing thus the commandment of God. Enter into account

with thyself ; see whether thou hast imitated thy parents, been ungrateful to thy Creator, and broken His commandments, in order to follow thy caprice and to satisfy thy appetites. Consider the number and magnitude of the benefits that thou hast received from His hands, and how ill thou hast repaid them, and weep over thine ingratitude and the offences thou hast committed against God, in the bitterness of thy soul and with contrition of heart.

Third Point.—Consider the wrath that God conceived against our first parents for a fault apparently not very grievous, and the chastisement wherewith He punished it. For He at once called them to judgment, heard them, and condemned them to the loss of their goods and to banishment from paradise. At the same time He deprived them and all their descendants of His grace. They forfeited original justice, the dominion over their passions, the submission to them of inferior creatures ; they remained subject to innumerable miseries, and condemned for ever to hell, and all their descendants are born in the enmity of God. Consider the innumerable sufferings, famines, pests, wars, inundations, and deaths that this sin has brought into the world, how many souls are suffering in hell on account of it, and how many will yet go there ; and such is the malice of this sin, that the Divine justice is not thereby satisfied. Cast thine eyes on Christ crucified, and contemplate what He suffers ; see how it is all caused by the sin of Adam, and endured to redeem us from his sin. Lay stress on the consideration of the gravity and malice of one single sin, and see what God will require for so many sins as thou hast committed, when for one single sin He imposes such grievous and lasting chastisements. Recognise the magnitude of the offence by the severity of the sentence, and humble thyself before the throne of God, imploring the pardon of thy sins, and firmly purposing never to offend Him again in the smallest thing, for the sake of anything that there is or can ever be in the world.

Fourth Point.—Consider the steps by which our first parents fell into sin, in order to avoid the like. The first, as Abbot Rupert says, was the giddiness and freedom of the woman in roaming about and around Paradise; for if she had preserved the retirement which became her sex, she had been shielded from sin. The second was freedom of the tongue, and needless curiosity in entering into conversation with the devil under the form of the serpent. The third was forgetfulness of death, believing what the serpent said, viz., that they would not die, as God had said they would, if they eat of the forbidden fruit. The fourth was the desire for honours, and the ambition of being like unto God, giving credit to the deceitful insinuations of Satan. The fifth was gluttony, yielding to their appetite and eating in contravention of the commandment of God. Contemplate thoughtfully these steps, and implore grace from our Lord to avoid them, and to follow the contrary ones taught us by Christ, in order to walk aright in His service, and to arrive at salvation.

HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE INFINITE MERCY OF GOD.

First Point.—Having meditated on the justice of God, and seen how He manifested it towards the angels and towards man, and how He exercises it towards sinners, let us now, in order to excite ourselves to confidence in Him, meditate on His infinite mercy which He manifests towards all from the beginning, and will never cease to exhibit towards all generations, and, as David tells us,¹ “from eternity unto eternity.” The first manifestation

¹ Psalm cii.

of this mercy consists in forestalling our miseries, and delivering us from falling into them even before they occur, which is the greatest of all mercies. Ponder how attentive God is to all our needs and weaknesses, and with what pity He regards our shortcomings. Consider what would become of us if He were to remove the sustaining arm of His mercy, and were to leave us to ourselves in our anxieties and trials, whether spiritual or corporal. Place thy hand on thy breast, and consider from how many He has freed thee of which thou art not even aware, forestalling them ere they assailed thee, and render Him infinite thanks for this.

Second Point.—Consider that, as the Book of Wisdom¹ tells us, the mercy of God is on a par with His omnipotence, and consider especially the clemency which He exhibits towards sinners, overlooking their offences, waiting for them to repent, and receiving them with the affection of a Father when they are sorry for their sins. And not only does He forgive them, but, instead of chastising them, He confers many favours upon them, giving them His grace, and therewith the inheritance of heaven, and many spiritual gifts. Praise His compassion; cease not to extol His mercy; entreat Him to manifest it towards thee, and to pardon thy transgressions, and from this meditation derive a great confidence of obtaining the forgiveness of thy sins, however numerous and grievous they may be, since the mercy of God is infinitely greater.

Third Point.—Consider the greatness of the mercy of God, which extends itself to all men, excluding none, even though they may have offended Him unceasingly since they first had the use of reason, and to all sorts of sins, however enormous they may be, and to all places and times, without delay or limit, nor fixing any other condition than that of repentance. “When the wicked man turneth himself away from his wickedness,” God says by Ezechiel, “he shall surely live.”² Consider the in-

¹ Wisdom xi.

² Ezechiel xviii.

numerable infidels throughout the world that are offending Him constantly, and see with what patience God endures them, being able so easily to take vengeance on them. Consider the favours that He bestows on them, the inspirations that He sends them, calling them to repentance in order to forgive them and bestow heaven upon them. O Lord ! how infinite is Thy mercy, how immense Thy compassion ; let me publish it to the whole world, and let all sinners come and partake of it, obtaining the pardon of their sins and thereby eternal beatitude.

Fourth Point.—Consider what mercy God manifests towards the just and His elect, predisposing them from their infancy by infinite graces in order that they should not fall into sin, accompanying and following them with this grace all through life with infinite favours, and at last setting the seal on all His mercies with the crown of glory. Rest thine eyes on St. John the Baptist and on Jeremias, whom He sanctified from their mother's womb, and consider the mercies that God bestowed on them from that time up to the last moment of their lives, contemplate particularly those which He conferred upon the most Holy Virgin from the first instant of her conception up to the moment of her glorious assumption into heaven, and thou wilt find that there was no instant or moment in which God was not taking pains to embellish that soul with the riches of His mercies. Rejoice to possess so merciful and generous a God ; acquire courage from the knowledge of His clemency ; strengthen thyself by His omnipotence, and entreat Him to make use towards thee of the same pity that He uses towards His elect, and that He leave thee not empty Who fills all creatures with His mercies.

*HUNDRED AND TWELFTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.***ON THE INFINITE LIBERALITY OF GOD TOWARDS ALL CREATURES.**

First Point.—Consider the infinite liberality of God, which consists in continually giving to His creatures immense gifts and graces without owing them anything nor expecting any return or profit from them. Repass in thy mind all the gifts of nature and of grace that God bestows on all, and especially those that He has granted to thee. Behold how generous He has shown Himself and does daily show Himself, and how bound therefore thou art to serve Him and to be generous towards Him. Return Him many thanks for all this, and renew thy resolution of serving Him.

Second Point.—Consider the second point wherein His liberality is manifested, namely, in the quality of the gifts that He bestows on man. For they are such that a single degree of grace is of greater value than all the treasures of the world, and the generosity of God is such that He even gives Himself, His Son, and the Holy Ghost, and His Body and Blood in sacrifice and as food, and lastly, as a reward to be eternally enjoyed in bliss. Learn to be generous towards God, to give Him all that thou hast and all that thou art, thy body, thy blood, thy soul, and all thy powers to be employed in His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider the third manner in which His generosity shines forth, namely, in giving to all without any exception, most equally, as far as His will is concerned, and learn to be generous towards thy neighbour, not limiting thyself to this one or that from love or affection to any in particular.

Fourth Point.—The fourth quality of this generosity of God's is that He gives without owing, and without

expecting payment from creatures; for he that gives what he owes or sells for the sake of profit cannot be termed generous. Ponder within thyself this perfection of God, and derive thence a firm resolution of being very generous towards Him, not confining thyself to what thou owest in regard to precepts, but performing moreover in His service works of supererogation for His glory's sake, without any view to recompense, in order that He may be generous towards thee according as thou art generous towards Him.

HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XIX.)

St. Luke tells us how Christ, going up to Jerusalem and contemplating the city, wept over its coming destruction, which was present to His mind, and how entering into the Temple, He cast out thence those who profaned it with their traffic.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Christ, whilst ascending triumphantly into Jerusalem in the midst of the acclamations of the people, wept bitterly over the future destruction of the city. In which thou mayst perceive how little He took to heart worldly honours, and how His whole mind was occupied with spiritual and divine things, with the glory of God and the welfare of souls, the loss of which He wept whilst in the very midst of human applause, His desire for our good affecting Him more than His personal interest. O Father, Who art truly a Father to Thy children! See how much thou dost owe Him, since He can take no delight in all the pleasures of the world apart from thine advantage, which is to Him of greater moment than the highest

honour that can be paid Him. Whence do thou learn to have no other interest than His honour and glory, no other pleasure than His, nor to take delight in anything of all that the world worships apart from the service of God. O my soul ! if thou couldst but arrive at the comprehension of this heavenly philosophy, and didst fix thy whole heart on God and eternal treasures, detaching it from the perishable ones of the earth, what peace wouldst thou acquire, and how tenderly would the Lord love thee ! Beg of Him grace to love Him with all thy strength, and to have no other employment than the procuring of His honour and glory and the accomplishment of His will.

Second Point.—Consider how lively was the grief of the heart of our Saviour whilst contemplating as already present the calamity which threatened that noble city, and how it drew from His eyes streams of tears. Let them not fall to the earth ; gather up those precious pearls, and with them purify thy heart. Christ sheds them in order to wash therewith the sins of Jerusalem ; but thine also were present to His mind. Implore Him to wash and purify thee from the stains that defile thee. Comfort thy weeping Lord by a sincere avowal of thy guilt, born of earnest contrition for thy sins, for that is the greatest consolation thou canst afford Him. Bewail thy sins and those of all men : weep with them that weep, and compassionate thy Redeemer.

Third Point.—Meditate the motives that Christ had for His grief, of which the first was that He was not known, and that His doctrine was rejected at the time of His visitation, Jerusalem remaining blind and in darkness in the midst of so much light. Oh, how often dost thou give Him cause for tears when He visits thee by His inspirations, and calls at the door of thy heart by means of His preachers and prelates, and those who enlighten thee by their examples, to withdraw thee from the obscurity of thy sins and introduce thee to the light of God ; and thou dost despise His visits and art deaf to His voice, more hardened and obdurate than was Jeru-

saalem at the time of His preaching. Behold God weeps over thee; dry up His tears and give Him no further cause for sorrow; arise from the blindness in which thou livest and be converted to God.

Fourth Point.—The second motive for Christ's sorrow was the calamity which threatened that noble city, which was to be destroyed, so that of all its edifices there was not to remain a stone upon a stone, and the Redeemer so compassionated its ruin that He shed from His innermost heart torrents of tears. Ponder here how much more worthy of tears is the loss of a soul redeemed by the Blood of Christ than the ruin of a material city; and if the Saviour weeps over the ruin of Jerusalem, how much more does He weep over thy soul, which is threatened with a far worse calamity on account of thy vices and sins! Christ wept whilst Jerusalem rejoiced, and thou art gay whilst Christ weeps over thee. Pause a while and weep over thy perdition; bewail thy blindness, and consider that it is such as to cost thy Redeemer tears. Cast thyself at His feet, entreat His pardon, bemoan thy sins with true contrition, and thou wilt assuage His grief, give Him cause for joy, rejoice the angels, and save thyself from destruction.

HUNDRED AND FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE LIFE TO COME.

First Point.—Gaze on the tears that Christ sheds, and hearken to the words that fall from His lips, wherein He expresses the cause of His grief: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round,

and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." Observe and meditate one by one all the words of thy Redeemer; He first bewails the blindness of Jerusalem, which sees not the evils that threaten her, carried away as she is by present pleasures and entangled in temporal interests and profits. O Lord! what great cause hast Thou to weep to-day over so many persons who remember not the future, preoccupied as they are with present advantages, who lift not their eyes to see the calamities that threaten them, and, inebriated with the wine of temporal goods, like brute animals, think only of what they have at hand, forgetful of the time to come. O my soul! open thine eyes, and be not dazzled with the tinsel that glitters in the tents of this world. Look to the future, consider in time the pitfalls into which thou mayst be lead and the calamity that threatens thee, in order that the Lord may not have to bewail thy blindness and misery as He did that of Jerusalem.

Second Point.—Consider what was the calamity that threatened Jerusalem, and what is that which threatens thee; for, according to St. Gregory, the disaster that threatened Jerusalem was the destruction that it suffered forty years later under Titus and Vespasian, who levelled it to the ground, ruining it, and killing or carrying into captivity all its inhabitants; and the calamity which threatens thee is hell for ever. Jerusalem was surrounded by men, her enemies, and thou wilt be surrounded by the devils, the principal enemies of thy soul. Jerusalem was beaten flat to the ground, and thou wilt be cast down into hell; in the one case all the inhabitants were carried away captive into other lands; in thine the devils will bind thee and conduct thee into the eternal dungeons. That captivity had an end and that ruin a limit, but thine will have neither end nor remedy. Oh, that thou didst know the calamity that threatens thee on account

of thy sins, and that, considering how terrible and frightful it is, thou didst forthwith exert thyself to avert it! Beseech of God light to know it, prudence to forestall it, and His grace to exchangethis peril for the happiness of heaven.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says of Jerusalem, “This thy day.” O my soul! thy day will also soon be past and that of God will come: thine is the one He grants thee wherein to work according to thy free will, whatever that will chooses; and His day will be that in which He will no longer allow thee to labour and to walk according to thy choice, and when the time of meriting will be no more. Behold how rapidly all things pass away and that time flows on like a river, the water of which never returns; so neither does the day that is past. This is thy day, because God grants it to thee therein to labour well and earn heaven, and the morrow will be the day of God, in which He will call thee to give an exact account of all things. Wherefore see how thou livest, and what will become of thee in that tremendous day of the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ laments the peace that Jerusalem was enjoying in foolish delights and amusements with such security, and as little heed of what threatened her as though she had no enemies nor had deserved so great a chastisement. Bewail with Christ the peace that men at the present day enjoy in their sins, which is their greatest calamity; for their conscience reproaches them not, nor does it destroy their slumber, nor do they dread anything, and whilst their sins condemn them to hell, they have no anxiety or care on the subject. The reason thereof is, that they give no thought to it, and there is nothing of which they are so forgetful as their end and final abode, which is that of which they should be most mindful. Entreat the Lord to send men into the world who shall arouse it and warn and prepare men for their last end, and be not thou of those who live deceived and wedded to their sins and vices in peace and tranquillity.

HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON CHRIST'S ZEAL FOR THE HOLY TEMPLE AND FOR THE
GLORY OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider how Christ manifested His zeal for the glory of God and the honour of His holy Temple by going straight into the Temple, and with great authority and determination casting out those who profaned it with secular traffic of buying and selling. Ponder how greatly God is offended by the profanation of His holy Temple, and how zealous Christ was that due honour and veneration should be paid to it. Derive hence sentiments of reverence and resolutions of worshipping God in His temples, of being zealous for the sacred worship as far as in thee lies, never permitting it to be profaned by any one, least of all by thy own actions, for these at least are under thy control.

Second Point.—Consider those words of the Saviour, "My house is the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves." In which He teaches us that the church is a place dedicated to prayer to God, and not to be used for purposes of trade; to so use it is in a manner to rob God of His own. If thou be an ecclesiastic, learn hence not to make use of the church as a means of increasing thy revenue, nor of heaping up wealth, but to pray to God for the people and for thyself, giving Him thanks, soliciting His graces, and securing favours from His hand for all; and if thou dost otherwise, fear His indignation and the chastisement of His arm.

Third Point.—Search thine own breast, and consider how thou hast profaned the temple of thy soul, in which God implanted His image, therein to dwell, and there to be adored and served by thee. Thou hast profaned it by

setting up therein the idols of thy honour, thy pleasures, and riches; thou hast profaned it with sales, and purchases, and secular business, more grievously than these people whom Christ cast out of the material Temple of Jerusalem, and thou dost deserve greater chastisement than they. Bewail thy sins, and beg of God to visit thy soul as a pitiful Father, not as a rigorous Judge; beseech Him to cleanse it from the dross of sin, and from everything that is displeasing in His sight, or that offends His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider and thoughtfully ponder how that Temple was the type and figure of the Humanity of the Saviour, Whom the Jews insulted with so many grievous wrongs, whilst He wept over their sins and consequent ruin; and do thou also bewail how little known our Saviour is by men, how unworthily He is treated by heretics, and yet more so by bad Christians. Implore the Lord to put a remedy to so many evils, and to grant thee grace not to fall into the like, but to treat Him with reverence, and to serve Him as thou shouldst.

HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE PERFECTION OF THE WORKS OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider the use that God made of His omnipotence, which was to communicate His goodness to creatures, to give them being, and make them participators of His power and of the infinite perfections of His nature. Whence thou shouldst learn not to use the power that He may have accorded to thee in works of vainglory, ostentation, and worldly pomp, but rather in doing good to all, and especially to the more poor and needy. Give many thanks to the Lord for the favours He has conferred on thee in particular, whereby thou art the more bound to serve Him, and solicit His grace to

aspire to copy Him as far as thy weakness permits thee to imitate His perfection.

Second Point.—Consider what the sacred text tells us,¹ namely, that after creating each thing God contemplated it again, and examined it to see that it was good. Not that His works needed revision, nor that He required to contemplate them in order to know what manner of thing they were, but in order to teach us to examine our works and review ourselves in them, endeavouring to perfect them by removing the dross that our contact communicates to them, so as to give them the finish of perfection. Draw hence a resolution of examining thine actions and improving them as much as thou canst, reviewing thy manner of prayer, thy confessions and communions, the performance of thy devotions, hearing of mass, daily examinations, and the duties of thy state, striving to accomplish all with perfection.

Third Point.—Consider how the sacred text adds, “And God saw *all* the things (at once) that He had made, and they were very good.” In the first review He found them to be good, and in the second very good, so improved and perfected that they were superlatively very good. Whereof the holy Doctors give two reasons, drawn from the very words of the text. The first, that God improved and perfected them by His review, and by casting His eyes upon them ; for such is the regard of God that it perfects those on whom it is cast. Implore Him to look down upon thee, to perfect thee by His gaze, and to cleanse thy soul from all that is hateful in His sight, in order that He may never withdraw His eyes from thee. Secondly, because He saw them altogether, and their harmonious assemblage gave them an increased perfection and beauty in His sight over that which each possessed in itself. Whence thou shouldst draw, for the profit of thy soul, to follow the community in all things, to avoid singularity, and to associate thyself with the good, whose virtue may supply what

¹ Genesis i.

is wanting in thee, and so thou be pleasing in the sight of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider how all things have remained in the perfection in which God created them, man only excepted, who fell away by sin in Paradise. Repass briefly in review the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, the four elements, the birds, the fish, and animals, and so with the rest, and thou wilt find them in the same degree of essential perfection in which God created them. Man alone has lost it, since he separated himself from the Divine Will. Place thy hand on thy breast; reflect on thyself, and see whether thou dost possess the degree of perfection which God requires of thee, and blush in His presence to perceive that irrational and senseless creatures have the advantage over thee in this respect, and leave thee behind, for they have preserved the perfection that God bestowed on them, and thou hast not done so; excite thyself to the recovery of it by the grace of the Lord. Ponder, with St. Ambrose, that God praised all creatures after He had created them, with the exception of man, because the perfection of the other creatures consists in their exterior, and therefore on beholding them He praised them; but man's perfection is interior and not visible. Whence thou shouldst learn not to be solicitous for exterior beauty, but for the interior comeliness of the soul, which is what God requires of thee. Humble thyself in His presence, and beseech Him to perfect thee with His divine hands, for He knows that thou canst not do it with thine, for thou hast not of thyself either strength or virtue.

HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE REPOSE OF GOD AFTER THE CREATION.

First Point.—"And He (God) rested on the seventh day," says the sacred text, "from all the work which He

had done; and He blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Wherein thou shouldst ponder, first, that it is not said that God rested until He had terminated all the works that He had resolved to execute, and having finished them, He rested, to show us that we shall not find rest until we have finished and put the last stroke to all that God has appointed for us to do, nor until all our duties have been accomplished; but this done, we shall find repose. Attend to the fulfilment of thy duty, and to the performance of all that God has committed to thee; be diligent in performing it, and thou wilt find rest for thy heart; but if thou dost not accomplish thy duty, thou wilt never find repose; on the contrary, thou wilt constantly be assailed by anxiety, affliction, fear, and remorse of soul.

Second Point.—Consider wherein God took His rest, not *in* the works He had done, as St. Austin remarks, but apart from them: "*From all the works He had done,*" not *in* them. So that God in a manner withdrew and abstained from them, and thus reposed in Himself, in Whom alone true rest is to be found. O soul created for God! learn this lesson which He gives thee from the beginning of the world; and if thou wouldst find rest, seek it not in creatures, but in the Creator. Thou wilt find repose in God and with God; and the more thou withdrawest from creatures, the better wilt thou unite thyself with Him, and the greater rest wilt thou find.

Third Point.—Consider how the sacred text says that God blessed and sanctified that seventh day, because the blessing of God and His grace sanctify souls and make them agreeable to His Divine Majesty and heirs of His glory. Great peace wilt thou find and extreme felicity if thou dost obtain that blessing. Beseech the Lord to grant it to thee, and therewith the heirship of eternal wealth.

Fourth Point.—Consider how God sanctified this day, and what reasons He had for sanctifying it, namely, by suspending all exterior action, and devoting Himself to

the contemplation of Himself. Thus are we to keep holy the feasts and such days as God has chosen and set aside for His worship and service, abstaining from all work and corporal labour, and dedicating ourselves to prayer and the contemplation of divine things. Draw hence a salutary lesson for the sanctification of feast days, after the example of thy Creator, spending them in good works conducive to His honour and service, and profitable to thy soul. And with regard to the reasons He had, they were :—First, His honour and glory, in order that thou shouldst dedicate thereunto one day of the many thou dost spend on secular concerns. Secondly, in order that that seventh day should be a type of the beatitude which will follow after the labours of this life, and which will be complete repose. Thirdly, in order to symbolise the day of His Resurrection, on which He rested from the labours He had undergone for our redemption and that of the world, and which He was to sanctify and order to be kept holy by the faithful in memory of so signal a benefit ; and the Lord chose to give us Himself the example of what He was going to command by practising it first Himself. Meditate attentively on all this, and draw hence motives and instruction for the service of God, exciting thyself to zeal for His glory and worship, and to gratitude for His benefits, bearing them in mind, sanctifying the days dedicated to His service, and expecting the repose of His eternal glory after the trials of this life are over.

HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF PRESERVATION.

First Point.—Consider that, as God created thee by His infinite power and wisdom, so in like manner does

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He preserve thee, and give thee from hour to hour the being that thou hast, sustaining the first benefit, and renewing it daily for thy preservation. Consider all that thou owest to the Lord, how ill thou hast corresponded to such great mercy, and how thou shouldst show thy gratitude for the future.

Second Point.—Consider that not only does God preserve thee by His infinite power, but He likewise preserves all creatures, in order that they may serve thee and preserve thy life, for if they failed thou couldst not continue to exist. Thus the air thou breathest, the water thou drinkest, the bread thou eatest, the health thou enjoyest, the clothes wherewith thou art covered, the house thou dost inhabit, all are benefits which come to thee from the hand of thy Creator. Ponder here how thou hast used them to assist thee in promoting His service, since whilst He confers such favours on thee thou dost offend Him ; extol His infinite bounty, and His patience in bearing with thee and conferring favours upon thee ; give Him a thousand thanks for them, and purpose amendment for the future.

Third Point.—Consider how thou dost depend on thy Creator, for thou canst not raise a hand without His assistance, and unless He acts in unison with thee, concurring with His co-operation in all thy actions. Abase thyself in His presence, acknowledging thy nothingness, and that all thou dost possess comes from His hand, and is the work of His omnipotence. Humble thyself to the earth, and beseech Him not to leave thee to thine own misery and nothingness, but rather to shelter and protect thee with His right hand, lest thou fall into an abyss of sin.

Fourth Point.—Consider the many benefits that are included in this benefit of preservation ; for, without thy being aware of it, God preserves thee from many sicknesses which would destroy thy life. He protects thee from many enemies, from falling into the hands of robbers, and from the disastrous accidents in which others

travelling with thee have perished. Cast thine eyes on the past, and consider how many of thy fellow-students, brethren, and associates thou hast seen carried to the grave. Again, behold the illnesses and trials that others endure, and how many are in want of the very necessities of life, and recognise in all these things the benefits that come to thee from the hand of God, to Whom thou shouldst show gratitude for them, acknowledging in all things His infinite goodness and the immense love that He bears thee, and desiring to render Him love for love.

HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS HIMSELF AND TOWARDS
MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God loves Himself infinitely, because as goodness is the object and cause of love, and the goodness of God is infinite, so God loves Himself with an infinite love ; on the one hand, because this love proceeds from Himself, and on the other, because His goodness, being essentially Himself, obliges Him to delight and take complacency in Himself and in all His perfections and greatness. For all which I will rejoice and glorify God above all that is created, because He is so good, so holy, so perfect, and so worthy of being loved, and I will call on all creatures to rejoice in God, and to praise and glorify Him unceasingly.

Second Point.—Consider the love that God bears towards all creatures which possess a spark of His goodness, and especially towards man, who is His image ; and that, as it is natural to love one's own likeness, so God loves man with an especial affection, because of the likeness that man bears to Him. Consider who God is

and who man is, that God should love him and manifest His good will towards him. For whilst, on the one hand, we consider the littleness of man, and on the other, the infinite greatness of God, His bounty is more clearly manifested to our view, and affords us fresh motive for admiration and for praising Him, that He is so good, so holy, so generous, so bounteous, and so willing to do good. Praise and extol His love, and beseech the angels and all creatures to assist thee in blessing and glorifying Him for ever.

Third Point.—Consider that this love of God does not confine itself to good will only, but it extends itself to works, the Lord conferring on thee many and great benefits for the sake of the love that He bears thee. Pass in review the general benefits of creation, preservation, redemption, &c., and the particular ones that thou receivest continually from the hand of God, and recognise them all as the effects of His love. Let His works discover to thee the love of that Heart which never ceases to do thee good, because it ceases not to love thee, nor ever will for all eternity, and derive hence sentiments of everlasting gratitude to Him to Whom thou art so indebted, and of immense love, never allowing thy will any other occupation than God and the accomplishment of His will and pleasure.

Fourth Point.—Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see what return of love thou dost make to thy Creator for that which He bears thee, and by what works thou dost show thy gratitude for the favours that thou daily receivest from His hand. Weep over thy ingratitude, that, instead of repaying Him by faithful service, thou hast repaid Him by offences, which is the highest degree of ingratitude. Bewail that which thou hast shown Him until now, and inflame thy heart with a lively love for God, resolving to testify it, as far as thou art able, by fidelity in His service.

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